

Vermeer's Impact on His Contemporaries

In the cornucopia of publications on Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675) of the last thirty years, readers can find little about the artist's influence on painters of his time. Scholars have traditionally assumed that his impact was marginal as the bulk of his small output was owned by a handful of Delft collectors, most notably his supposed patron Pieter Claesz. van Ruyven.¹ A few monographic studies on other artists, nonetheless, have indicated that some did respond to the Delft painter's work. This article hopes to demonstrate that, in fact, several leading Dutch genre painters of the third quarter of the seventeenth century admired and borrowed elements from Vermeer's work.

Admittedly, Vermeer's impact was limited in comparison to that of other major genre painters, such as Gerrit Dou (1613-1675) and Gerard ter Borch (1617-1681), who were far more prolific. Moreover, these artists reached their artistic peak several years before Vermeer, whose generation had significantly fewer followers due to the plummeting of the Dutch art market in 1672, which dissuaded many young men from choosing an artistic career. Furthermore, the late seventeenth-century penchant for elegance in Dutch art stimulated young painters to adopt the mannered style of artists such as Frans van Mieris (1635-1681) rather than the classical beauty of Vermeer. Instead of inspiring many followers, Vermeer's work served as a point of departure to several of his contemporaries, some of whom were older and had initially influenced him during the earlier part of his career.

It is impossible to ascertain who was the first painter to draw inspiration from Vermeer's work. Artists' friends, collaborators, pupils and contemporaries from 'the circle of' are usually the earliest to appropriate new ideas. In Vermeer's case these relations are hard to establish, as we know little for certain about his environment. It has been convincingly argued, nonetheless, that Vermeer worked in close proximity to Pieter de Hooch (1629-1684) in the late 1650s, but that it was the latter—who was about three years older—who led the way in developing interiors based on rectilinear spatial designs lit by natural daylight.² Still, the possibility should not be excluded that his younger colleague may have provided him with ideas in the late 1650s, even if we do not recognise them in extant works. The first visible signs of Vermeer's impact on De Hooch probably date from soon after the latter's departure to Amsterdam in the early 1660s, when he painted *A Woman Weighing Coins* in response to the Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Balance* (National Gallery of Art, Washington).³ The direction of influence is suggested by the fact that single-figure scenes are exceptional in De Hooch's oeuvre, not in Vermeer's. Moreover, De Hooch's painting includes an open window in the left foreground and a bundled up tapestry on the table, two elements new to De Hooch, but previously explored by Vermeer.⁴ De Hooch returned to Vermeer's work in the mid-1670s, as I shall discuss later.

Even if De Hooch attempted to emulate Vermeer as early as 1664, he may have been preceded by Jan Steen (1626-1679) and Van Mieris. Though earning his living primarily as a brewer during his short residence in Delft (1654-c. 1657/1658), the former must have kept abreast with local artistic developments. In 1660, when Steen had moved to Warmond and had returned to full-time painting, he completed *Grace before the Meal*, which shows distinct traces of Vermeer's and De Hooch's styles of around 1658-1660, such as the spatial relationship of the interior, the placement of the couple in the corner, the plastered whitish back wall and the incoming daylight.⁵ The only element suggesting an exclusive link to Vermeer is the barrel with a burlap and a plate with a ham on top of it. Steen positioned the ensemble strategically between the pious family and the viewer in order to create a physical and psychological distance between them.⁶ Vermeer had repeatedly included food still lifes in the foregrounds of his earliest genre scenes with a similar intent.⁷

Van Mieris may also have drawn inspiration from his Delft colleague in the early 1660s. It is generally assumed that Vermeer painted his representations of single women, depicted at three-quarter length, standing in front of a table—strengthening the verticality of the female figure, in response to Van Mieris's works, such as *A Woman Examining Herself in a Mirror* of around 1662.⁸ However, if Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Water Jug* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) dates from before 1662, as some have argued, the influence may have been in the opposite direction.⁹

A more certain early admirer of Vermeer's work was Emanuel de Witte (c. 1617-1691/1692). His virtuoso church interiors painted during the period he lived in Delft made a strong impact on local artists, including Vermeer. After his departure to Amsterdam in the early 1650s, De Witte continued his specialisation, but sporadically deviated from his standard repertoire. One of his excursions, *Interior with a Woman Playing a Virginal* (fig. 1), dated by most scholars to between 1664 and 1667, suggests that De Witte studied Vermeer's *Lady at the Virginal with a Gentleman* (*The Music Lesson*) (fig. 2) soon after its completion in 1662-1664.¹⁰ The picture repeats the motif of a woman behind a virginal positioned parallel to the picture plane. De Witte also hung a mirror above the lid, which reflects (part of) the musician's face.¹¹



1 Emanuel de Witte, *Interior with a Woman Playing a Virginal*, 1664-1667, signed (falsely) *P. de Hooch*, canvas, 77.5 x 104.5 cm. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen.



2 Johannes Vermeer, *Lady at the Virginal with a Gentleman* (*The Music Lesson*), c. 1662-1664, signed *IVMeer*, canvas, 74 x 64.5 cm. London, The Royal Collection © 2010 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

3
 Caspar Netscher, *Lace-Maker*,
 signed and dated 1664, canvas,
 34 x 28 cm. London, The Wallace
 Collection. © By kind permission
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 Collection, London.



Usually not associated with the Delft style of painting, Caspar Netscher (1639-1684) was also among the first to respond to Vermeer's work. A resident of The Hague by 1662, Netscher must have been particularly impressed by *The Milkmaid* (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) of 1657-1660, which served as the point of departure for his phenomenal *Lace-Maker* (fig. 3) of 1664. The works share the simplicity in composition, the soft-focus technique and the close proximity of the coarse white wall parallel to the picture plane. Furthermore, the way in which the evenly lit right side of the wall gradually changes into a more shady area at two-thirds is remarkably similar. Like his Delft colleague, Netscher contrasted the wall with the woman's colourful jacket, painted several objects casually placed in the room, and stuck an unused nail in the wall above the woman's head.¹² In *Woman at Her Toilet*, painted the following year, Netscher silhouetted a single figure in near-profile against a back wall and 'locked in' her head by hanging a painting behind it, features strongly reminiscent of Vermeer's work and *Woman Holding a Balance* in particular.¹³

Possibly encouraged by his fellow townsman De Hooch, Gabriel Metsu (1629-1667) painted some five works in the mid-1660s that reveal his knowledge of Vermeer's work.¹⁴ His most renowned in this respect are the companion pieces *A Man*

4
 Gabriel Metsu, *A Woman Reading a Letter*, 1664-1666, signed *Mr/Metsu/tot Amst[er]dam*//*Port*, panel, 52.5 x 40.2 cm. Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland. Sir Alfred and Lady Beit Gift, 1987 (Beit Collection), Photo © National Gallery of Ireland.



Writing a Letter and *A Woman Reading a Letter* (fig. 4). In these paintings, various features, such as the placement of a painting on the back wall reinforcing a figure in front of it, the chequered marble-tiled floor, the emphasis on the natural daylight, the presence of white plastered back wall parallel to the picture plane and the idea of creating solidity by dividing up the composition into geometrical shapes, are instantly recognisable as Vermeer-like. However, only a handful of details in Metsu's pendants can be traced back to specific compositions—the row of Delft tiles skirting the rooms, which also appear in *The Milkmaid*, being one of them. Rather than incorporating elements into his own repertoire, it seems as if Metsu painted two works in Vermeer's style. This is corroborated by the fact that he approximated his contemporary's unique painting technique in a few areas. The reflections on the gilded frame on the back wall in *A Man Writing a Letter*, for example, are suggested by loose touches and *pointillés*, which also appear in works such as *The Milkmaid*. In *A Woman Reading a Letter*, moreover, Metsu painted the woman's jacket with significantly little gradation in tonal values, which gives the effect of abstraction, a technique Vermeer

applied progressively in his paintings from the mid-1660s onwards.

Soon after, Metsu employed the 'schematic' technique on a larger scale in *The Sick Child*, which has remarkably flat brushwork.¹⁵ The compositional starting point for this painting was *The Milkmaid*, primarily in terms of the inclination of the woman's head, contemplative expression and the way she holds her hands. In both works bright blue, red, yellow and green are limited to the centre and one bottom corner of the composition and contrast with the monochrome colours of the rest of the scene. Furthermore, the way in which objects, such as the map, the grisaille and the earthenware pot, are set off against a white back wall and fill corners is strongly reminiscent of Vermeer's style. The same is true for the way in which the map stabilises the woman's head and shoulders.

Even though Metsu was a resident of Amsterdam at the time, he was for a brief moment the most prolific propagator of Vermeer's style. Cornelis de Man (1621-1706), however, soon overtook him in this respect. An eclectic and versatile artist from Delft, De Man was quite some years older than Vermeer and De Hooch, but painted several domestic interiors in their styles from the mid-1660s onwards. Having a preference for oblique projection (two-point perspective), strongly receding interiors and conspicuous tiled floor patterns, he painted a series of works that reflect Vermeer's influence in varying degrees and draw on a wide range of paintings. In *Geographers at Work* (fig. 5), for example, De Man adopted elements from no fewer than four works by Vermeer. The subject of the painting derives from *The Astronomer* (Musée du Louvre, Paris), which depicts a similar pensive scholar, arms spread and touching a globe. The disposition and postures of the three figures are loosely based on *The Girl with the Wineglass* (Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig), which includes a similarly melancholic figure resting his elbow on the table to support his head. Furthermore, the contrast between the disproportionally large figure in the foreground and the smaller figure at the other end of the table calls to mind *Officer and a Laughing Woman* (fig. 6).



5
Cornelis de Man, *Geographers at Work*, c. 1670, canvas, 81 x 68 cm. Hamburg, Hamburger Kunsthalle. © bpk, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Elke Walford.



6
Johannes Vermeer, *Officer and a Laughing Woman*, 1657-1658, canvas, 50.5 x 46 cm. New York, The Frick Collection. © The Frick Collection, New York.

The mirror on the back wall reflecting the figures on the right, finally, is a ploy quoted from *Lady at the Virginal with a Gentleman (The Music Lesson)* (fig. 2).¹⁶ In several other paintings, De Man appropriated subjects, motifs, figural arrangements and compositions from an additional five works by Vermeer: *Girl Interrupted at Her Music* (Frick Collection, New York), *The Interruption of the Music* (Frick Collection, New York), *The Love Letter* (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), *Drinking Woman with a Gentleman* and *Woman Weighing Coins* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) and possibly also *Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window* (Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden).¹⁷

From the late 1660s, the Rotterdam painter Jacob Ochtervelt (1634-1682) also frequently drew inspiration from Vermeer, but reworked elements more subtly than De Man.¹⁸ In one of his finest paintings, *The Music Party* (fig. 7), he repeated the striking motif of a woman playing a keyboard instrument placed parallel to the back wall from *Lady at the Virginal with a Gentleman (The Music Lesson)* (fig. 2). Her head and shoulders are accentuated by the top lid of the virginal and the bottom of the map on the brightly illuminated plastered wall. Together with a violin-playing man and a singing woman she forms a trio, which both in terms of the serene atmosphere as well as the varied seating positions is reminiscent of *The Concert* (formerly Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston).¹⁹ In a handful of other pictures by Ochtervelt, traces of Vermeer's works can be found, such as a man in a shady left foreground facing a woman in bright daylight on the right, a carpet-covered table positioned between a musical company and the viewer and heads 'locked in' by maps or paintings on the back wall.²⁰

In the middle of the 1670s, De Hooch returned to Vermeer for inspiration, including a number of obvious quotations from the latter's works in various pictures. In *Three Figures at a Table*, and *a Couple at a Harpsichord*, for instance, De Hooch repeated the woman behind a virginal seen from the back from *Lady at the Virginal with a Gentleman (The Music Lesson)* (fig. 2). He made her sit down, however, and placed her male companion behind her, rather than next to her.²¹ A more original variation is *Couple with a Parrot*, in which De Hooch used the viewpoint of Vermeer's *Love*

7
Jacob Ochtervelt, *The Music Party*,
1676-1680, canvas, 84.5 x 75 cm.
London, The National Gallery.
© The National Gallery, London.





Letter (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), a hallway leading to a *doorkijkje* into a room with figures, as the setting for a lady and a gentleman playing with a bird.²²

Around the same time, even Ter Borch completed one work in Vermeer's style. The artist from Zwolle, who took up permanent residence in Deventer around 1654, was in all likelihood a long-time acquaintance of the Delft painter. Both artists had jointly signed a document in the latter's hometown on 22 April 1653, at a time when Ter Borch was an up-and-coming artist and Vermeer had just finished his apprenticeship.²³ About four years later, Ter Borch's high-life scenes became the thematic foundations of Vermeer's genre scenes. However, around or just after 1675, when Ter Borch was in his late fifties, he turned to his younger colleague's work for inspiration. His *Musical Duo* (fig. 8) shows the same disproportional contrast in size between a foreground figure seen from behind and a background figure seen from the front as Vermeer had painted in *Officer and a Laughing Girl* (fig. 6). Visible in the bottom right corner are diagonally laid tiles, the only ones in Ter Borch's oeuvre and an obvious reference to Vermeer's evocative floor patterns. Finally, the emphatically lit back wall looks unlike anything he had painted thus far, but echo those in Vermeer's genre scenes.²⁴

Towards the end of the century, Michiel van Musscher (1645-1705) painted, as far as we know, the only seventeenth-century derivative of *The Art of Painting* (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), though it shows an artist portraying a gentleman, not a woman dressed up as a muse.²⁵ Another studio scene by Van Musscher depicts a comparable space in which an artist mixes his paints.²⁶ Although the protagonist is male and is seated on a chair, his posture—his head bent forward, his body leaning to the left—and the positioning of his shoulders, arms and hands are remarkably similar to those of the woman in Vermeer's *Milkmaid*. Another picture, attributed to Van Musscher, used to be regarded as the Delft painter's missing self-portrait.²⁷ It shows an artist in a pink robe and black bonnet seated at a table laden with many painterly accoutrements. The partially sun-lit back wall is similar to many in Vermeer's works, as is the chair in the left foreground. However, Van Musscher made a refreshing alteration by shifting the viewing point in such a way that the artist, the room and the table in front of him are seen from an oblique angle.

Aside from paintings by known masters, one can identify a handful of works inspired by Vermeer which have never been attributed with unanimous consent. Some of these were traditionally regarded as works by Vermeer himself, such as an intriguing variation of *The Astronomer* (Musée du Louvre, Paris). Depicting a scholar at his desk touching the globe in front of him, the picture is possibly by the Rotterdam painter Olivier van Deuren (1666-1714).²⁸ Attributed to at least twelve artists, *A Woman Refusing a Glass of Wine* from the National Gallery, London, is a puzzling work with one specific Vermeerian detail in the background: a man, seen from the back, standing in front of cupboard, whose face is visible to the viewer in a mirror on the back wall. This is again a variation on the female musician in *Lady at the Virginal with a Gentleman (The Music Lesson)* (fig. 2).²⁹

At this point, a list can be drawn up of all the works by Vermeer that served as inspiration for other painters of his era:

- *Officer and a Laughing Girl* (fig. 6), 1657-1658, Frick Collection, New York
- *The Milkmaid*, 1657-1660, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
- *The Glass of Wine*, 1658-1660, Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin
- *Girl Interrupted at Her Music*, 1658-1661, Frick Collection, New York
- *The Girl with the Wineglass*, 1659-1660, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig
- *Lady at the Virginal with a Gentleman (The Music Lesson)* (fig. 2), 1662-1664, Collection Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, London
- *The Concert*, 1664-1666, formerly Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston (stolen, 1990)
- *Woman Holding a Balance*, 1663-1664, National Gallery of Art, Washington
- *The Girl with the Red Hat*, 1665-1667, National Gallery of Art, Washington
- *The Art of Painting*, 1666-1668, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
- *The Astronomer*, 1668, Musée du Louvre, Paris
- *The Love Letter*, 1669-1670, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Possibly:

- *Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window*, 1657, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden
- *The Little Street*, 1657-1661, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
- *Woman with a Pearl Necklace*, 1663-1664, Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin

This list indicates that seventeenth-century painters made variations on twelve, possibly fifteen of Vermeer's works. These numbers equal to more than one-third of the

artist's extant oeuvre and about a quarter of his total estimated production—we need to take into account that variations of 'lost' works by Vermeer painted by his contemporaries may have survived but remain unrecognised.³⁰ This means that the Delft painter's oeuvre was by no means hidden in collectors' cabinets. In fact, the statistics are quite high for an artist who in all probability had no significant pupils. By comparison, most of Dou's and Ter Borch's genre scenes painted during their heyday left traces in works by other painters but constitute only a part of their total production.

A review of the list prompts the question as to where contemporaries could have accessed Vermeer's works. Some may have visited his studio in the house on the Oude Langedijk. Only Steen, De Witte and Metsu drew inspiration from unfinished or recently completed pictures and may, thus, have been among Vermeer's personal guests. Additionally, Metsu and several other painters responded to works that had been painted a few years earlier and had presumably left Vermeer's workshop in the meantime. More than half of the paintings that inspired his contemporaries (see list on p. 58)—nine in total—presumably went to Pieter Claesz. van Ruyven. After his death in 1674, his collection passed to his wife, then to his daughter and subsequently to his son-in-law, Jacob Abrahamsz. Dissius, whose posthumous auction in 1696 included no less than twenty-one works by the Delft painter.³¹ Hence, the Van Ruyven-Dissius family must have allowed various artists, including Metsu, De Man, Ochtervelt, De Hooch, Ter Borch, Van Musscher and possibly Van Deuren, to admire their exceptional collection. Yet, if the family opened up their collection to so many artists, one wonders why the French diplomat Balthasar de Monconys—when he visited Vermeer's workshop in August 1663 and learned that the artist did not have any of his works on view—did not go to Van Ruyven's house but to that of the Delft baker Hendrick van Buyten to see a specimen of Vermeer's work.³²

One of the paintings Van Ruyven did not acquire was *The Art of Painting* of 1666-1668. As it remained in the artist's possession until his death, some scholars have argued that it functioned as a demonstration piece for prospective collectors.³³ However, no variations of this masterpiece made during the seven to eleven years it hung in the artist's house are known. The only seventeenth-century artist to draw inspiration from it, Van Musscher, did so twenty-five years after Vermeer's death—his mother-in-law sold it reluctantly at auction in March 1677. It is hard to imagine that Vermeer used this magnificent painting to attract new clients, while none of his colleagues, not even De Man, had an interest in emulating it.

Another picture that stayed in Delft for quite some time was *The Glass of Wine* (Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin), which appeared at auction there in 1736.³⁴ Both De Man and an anonymous painter of a pastiche formerly attributed to Ochtervelt made variations of it.³⁵ The former, a Delft painter, was undoubtedly well-placed to access it. As Vermeer's *Girl Interrupted at Her Music*, *The Concert*, *The Astronomer* and *Girl Reading a Letter at Open Window* are all first recorded in Amsterdam and Rotterdam in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, little can be said about where artists may have seen them. *The Astronomer*, for example, was sold at a sale in Rotterdam on 27 April 1713. At least two derivations of it exist, one by De Man and another one possibly by Van Deuren. We may speculate that the latter studied it in his hometown of Rotterdam in the 1680s, after it had been acquired from a collection in Delft, where De Man saw it in the late 1660s-early 1670s.

Wherever seventeenth-century painters studied Vermeer's work, they were interested in adopting a limited number of features. What follows is a list of the most frequently quoted elements:

- The plastered white wall, parallel to the picture plane, lit by natural daylight. Originating from genre scenes by Carel Fabritius (1622-1654) and Anthonie Palamedes

- (1601-1673) as well as church interiors by De Witte and Gerard Houckgeest (c. 1600-1661), this feature became one of Vermeer's trademarks and appears in nearly all his interior scenes in a more prominent and evocative way than in works by his predecessors and contemporaries, including De Hooch;
- The division of the composition into geometric patterns, which Vermeer adopted from De Hooch, but elevated to unprecedented heights in paintings such as *Lady at the Virginal with a Gentleman (The Music Lesson)* (fig. 2) and *Woman Holding a Balance*;
 - The placement of paintings, maps and other objects, such as the top lid of a virginal, to reinforce figures standing in front of them, again explored previously by De Hooch, but used more frequently and powerfully by Vermeer;
 - The positioning of objects in the foreground in order to create a psychological distance between the figures and the viewer, initially still-life objects, but later more dramatically in the form of chairs and tables. Vermeer's most popular *repoussoir* was the figure seated on a chair, which is disproportionally larger than another figure in the middle ground (as if observed through a lens), painted by Vermeer in his *Officer and a Laughing Girl* (fig. 6).
 - A woman, seen from the back, in front of a virginal, placed against a wall parallel to the picture plane, as painted by Vermeer in *Lady at the Virginal with a Gentleman (The Music Lesson)* (fig. 2);³⁶
 - A mirror on the back wall showing the face of a figure whose back is turned to the viewer. Vermeer incorporated the ploy, possibly inspired by Samuel van Hoogstraten's (1627-1678) *View down a Corridor* of 1662, which shows a gentleman's face reflected in a mirror, in an unrivalled manner in *Lady at the Virginal with a Gentleman (The Music Lesson)* (fig. 2);³⁷

This list contains predominantly features that had been previously explored by other painters, but which were improved on by Vermeer. Enhancing and popularising existing subjects, compositions, motifs and ploys was a common phenomenon in Dutch seventeenth century art. Dirck Hals (1591-1656), for example, already painted women reading love letters in an interior in the 1630s, but it was Ter Borch's alluring images of tacit ladies writing and reading of the 1650s that captured the imagination of many contemporary genre painters, including Vermeer, leading to a surge in the depiction of amorous correspondence in the third quarter of the seventeenth century.³⁸

The prime conclusion to be drawn from the second list is that the most popular features were striking, but somewhat superficial motifs and compositional borrowings. Metsu was among the very few artists to actually create works in the style of Vermeer and imitate techniques such as the halation of highlights and the abstraction of colour areas. Furthermore, the quietness and stillness in Vermeer's work—one of the most appealing aspects of the artist's work to twenty-first-century art lovers, was only marginally adopted by other artists. Most of his contemporaries preferred to enliven their works with more pictorial accoutrements. Ironically, Vermeer's most prolific follower, De Man, often lapsed into anecdotal scenes characterised by a compositional *horror vacui*.

The list also suggests that *Lady at the Virginal with a Gentleman (The Music Lesson)* (fig. 2) and *Officer and a Laughing Girl* (fig. 6) were among Vermeer's most frequently quoted works, not, for example, *A View of Delft* (Mauritshuis, The Hague), a modern favourite and the most expensive painting on Dissius's auction in 1696.³⁹ This cannot be explained by the inaccessibility of the sizable cityscape. As the picture was owned by Van Ruyven/Dissius, artists supposedly could have studied it freely. *Woman Writing a Letter, with Her Maid* (National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin), in all probability owned by Hendrick van Buyten, was not inaccessible either. De Mon-

cony easily gained access to the house of the Delft baker the same afternoon he realised that Vermeer did not have any of his own works in his studio. Yet seventeenth-century variations of this grand composition are unknown.

One reason that may partially explain why artists did not respond to all works by Vermeer was that some pictures, such as *The Guitar Player* (Kenwood House, London) and *Woman Seated at the Virginal* (National Gallery, London), do not have a unique, innovative motif or striking compositional arrangement that other artists could easily incorporate in their own work. These paintings were part of long, popular iconographical traditions, among which Vermeer's pictures hardly stood out in terms of their subject or composition. However, the technique in which they were executed is exceptional, but this was, as we have seen, of little interest to Vermeer's contemporaries. It should be added that the two works mentioned above date from after 1670, a period when none of Vermeer's paintings served as inspiration for his contemporaries (see list on p. 58). In fact, painters only had eyes for works produced between the late 1650s and the end of the 1660s and ignored those from the first and last phases of Vermeer's career. Furthermore, the lack of any variations on *A View of Delft* or *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (Mauritshuis, The Hague) may be explained by the pictures' subjects. The work of the Delft artist primarily attracted painters of interior scenes, none of whom produced townscapes or *tronies*. There is no doubt that they admired the two pictures, but they did not consider them useful for their own purpose. If a variation of *A View of Delft* ever surfaces, it is more likely to be by a city- or landscape specialist, who had been encouraged by a genre painter to study Vermeer's original in Van Ruyven's or Dissius's collection.

The way in which the Van Ruyven-Dissius collection impacted Vermeer's fame also needs to be addressed. On the one hand, it provided an unparalleled opportunity for artists to study and compare many of his works in one location. On the other, it meant that those from outside Delft rarely came in contact with Vermeer's work. Yet, just as De Monconys probably travelled at the recommendation of Constantijn Huygens from The Hague to Delft to look at Vermeer's work, so artists from other cities must have encouraged each other to travel to Delft and examine his paintings first-hand.⁴⁰ The journey seems not to have been an obstacle. Vermeer's works inspired various artists from out of town, including the likes of Netscher and Metsu, who had previously shown little interest in Delft painting. Furthermore, it may be hypothesised that some collectors, confronted with the fact that they could not purchase one of Vermeer's rare masterpieces, turned to other artists to commission a work in the style of the Delft painter. De Man may have met with this demand in Delft. Elsewhere, Metsu and Van Musscher may have been commissioned to emulate Vermeer's enchanting style.

In summary, the assumption that Vermeer's works were locked away and only known to a few collectors does not hold. He may not have had a large group of younger followers, but several key Dutch genre painters after 1660 responded to Vermeer's work, even if it was only once in their career. Vermeer's art enjoyed more than a short-lived hype and even provided an example for a handful of artists at the end of the century. It would take another 250 years, though, before Vermeer's impact became a global phenomenon.

NOTES

¹ Among the few authors that have explicitly discussed Vermeer's influence are A.K. Wheelock Jr., *Jan Vermeer*, New York 1981, p. 45: "If we have little information about any commissions Vermeer received, or about a relationship between him and Jacob Dissius, at least we can be fairly certain that his works were not widely known. With the possible exception of Metsu, Vermeer did not have a significant impact on other artists, which is surprising since he was a respected member of the Delft artistic community"; p. 156: "Vermeer had no pupils and little influence among other seventeenth-century Dutch artists"; W. Franits, 'Vermeer, Johannes', in: J. Turner, *Dictionary of Art*, London 1996, vol. 32, p. 267: "Despite the mastery of Vermeer's art, it did not exert a lasting impact on other artists. Vermeer had no recorded pupils and there are only isolated examples of his influence on other artists, such as Emanuel de Witte [...], Jan Steen, Pieter de Hooch and Gabriel Metsu." On Van Ruyven's role as Vermeer's patron, see J.M. Montias, *Vermeer and His Milieu: A Web of Social History*, Princeton, NJ, 1989, pp. 246-257.

² P.C. Sutton, *Pieter de Hooch. Complete Edition*, Oxford and New York 1980, p. 23.

³ Sutton 1980 (note 2), p. 96, no. 64, pl. XIV.

⁴ O. Naumann, *Frans van Mieris the Elder (1635-1681)*, Doornspijk 1981, vol. I, pp. 68-69, argued that De Hooch's *Woman Weighing Coins* relied, aside from *Woman Holding a Balance* (National Gallery of Art, Washington), on two other paintings by Vermeer. For the open casement window, he drew inspiration from *Woman with a Water Jug* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), whereas the position of the table, the chair and the carpet originated from Vermeer's *Woman with a Pearl Necklace*, according to Naumann. Although I believe that Vermeer's works served as De Hooch's example, it should be noted that the window in question also appears in earlier paintings by Vermeer: *The Glass of Wine* (Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin) and *The Girl with the Wineglass* (Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig). Furthermore, De Hooch himself had painted tables positioned in this way. The carpet, on the other hand, was new, but also appeared lying on the table in Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Balance* and to a less obvious extent in

Woman in Blue Reading a Letter (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam). Sutton 1980 (note 2), p. 34, initially argued that De Hooch's *Woman Weighing Coins* was an adaptation of Vermeer's version of the subject, pointing to the uniqueness of a single-figure composition in De Hooch's oeuvre. Sutton changed his opinion after an x-radiograph of De Hooch's painting revealed that the artist originally had intended to include a man sitting at a table (P.C. Sutton, *Pieter de Hooch, 1629-1684*, exh. cat. London (Dulwich Picture Gallery)/ Hartford, CT (Wadsworth Atheneum) 1998-1999, p. 54). He argued that it would have been unlikely for De Hooch to have included a second figure in the initial stages if he followed Vermeer's single-figure composition. However, this may as well indicate that De Hooch first intended to alter his colleague's composition into a standard two-figure scene, but later changed his mind. See also W. Liedtke, *Vermeer: The Complete Paintings*, Antwerp 2008, p. 118, who argued: "That De Hooch considered adding a seated figure in the background hardly suggests, as has been said, that his composition must precede Vermeer's."

⁵ K. Braun, *Alle tot nu toe bekende schilderijen van Jan Steen*, Rotterdam 1980, pp. 100-101, no. 115, ill.; A.K. Wheelock Jr. in H.P. Chapman et al., *Jan Steen. Painter and Storyteller*, exh. cat. Washington (National Gallery)/ Amsterdam (Rijksmuseum) 1996-1997, p. 141, suggested that Steen's picture was reminiscent of Vermeer's and De Hooch's interiors. M. Westermann, *The Amusements of Jan Steen. Comic Painting in the Seventeenth Century*, Zwolle 1997, p. 176, called Steen's painting "his transformation of a humble peasant etching by Adriaen van Ostade [...] into a meditation in paint on the good life, lived in a light of Vermeer's invention".

⁶ Westermann 1997 (note 5), pp. 175-176.

⁷ Some years later, Steen painted *Theft in a Brothel*, which is known only to the present author through a small black-and-white illustration in Braun 1980 (note 5), pp. 120-121, no. 240, ill., and seems to feature an enormous chair in the left foreground. This peculiar prop echoes the disproportionately large soldier in Vermeer's *Officer and Laughing Girl* (fig. 6). M.D. Henkel, *Kunstwanderer XIII (1931-1932)*, pp. 265-266, saw a connection between a depiction

of *Christ in the House of Mary and Martha*, which he regarded as by Steen, and Vermeer's version of the same subject. I agree with B. Kirshenbaum, *The Religious and Historical Paintings of Jan Steen*, Oxford 1977, p. 149, no. 6, that this painting is not by Steen and that the link between the two works is superficial. The most obvious similarities (e.g. the positioning of the Christ-figure, his rhetorical gesture, the seated Mary-figure and the diagonal placement of the table in the centre of the composition) are all elements that also occur in other, particularly Italian, renditions of the subject.

⁸ Naumann 1981 (note 4), vol. II, pp. 56-59, no. 46, pl. 46.

⁹ Naumann 1981 (note 4), vol. I, p. 68.

¹⁰ I. Manke, *Emanuel de Witte 1617-1692*, Amsterdam 1963, p. 129, dated De Witte's painting to 1660, i.e. before Vermeer's painting, but subsequent authors have dated it later in the decade. L. Slatkes, *Vermeer and His Contemporaries*, New York 1981, pp. 152-155, argued for a date of 1664-1665, while P.C. Sutton in *Masters of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Genre Painting*, exh. cat. Philadelphia (Philadelphia Museum of Art)/ Berlin (Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz)/ London (Royal Academy of Arts) 1984, p. 361, proposed a dated of c. 1665. W. Liedtke, *Architectural Painting in Delft*, Doornspijk 1982, pp. 127-128, argued that "Manke dates this picture too early, about 1660, in order to make her artist appear independent of, and influential for, pictures painted by De Hooch in Amsterdam." Liedtke suggested a date of 1665-1667 for De Witte's picture.

¹¹ De Witte's reliance on Vermeer had been already carefully suggested by P.C. Sutton in Philadelphia, Berlin and London 1984 (note 10), p. 361.

¹² M.E. Wieseman, *Caspar Netscher and Late Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting*, Doornspijk 2002, p. 57, mentions that Netscher's painting was already described in 1780 as "in the manner of the Delft Van der Meer." Wieseman also gives an elaborate comparison of Netscher's painting and Vermeer's style.

¹³ Wieseman 2002 (note 12), p. 63, noted Vermeer's influence on Netscher's *Woman at Her Toilet* (Wieseman 2002 (note 12), pp. 195-196, no. 43, colour pl. 7).

¹⁴ Presumably Metsu's first painting in response to Vermeer was *Woman at the Virginal and a Man with a Glass* (F.W. Robinson, *Gabriel Metsu (1629-1667): A Study of his Place in Dutch Genre Painting of the Golden Age*, New York 1974, p. 192, fig. 147), which echoes Vermeer's *Lady at the Virginal with a Gentleman (The Music Lesson)* (fig. 2). See S. Gudlaugsson, 'Kanttekeningen bij de ontwikkeling van Metsu', *Oud Holland*, LXXXIII (1968), p. 33, note 66. Furthermore, *The Concert* may have inspired Metsu in his choice of subject matter of the paintings in the background, which relate to the foreground scene. However, as neither Metsu's nor Vermeer's paintings are dated and both are estimated to have been painted in the middle of the 1660s, it is impossible to determine the direction of the influence. Another painting by Metsu indebted to Vermeer is *A Woman at a Virginal* (Robinson 1974, p. 193, fig. 148), which repeats the idea of a woman at a virginal seen from the back, as appearing in *Lady at the Virginal with a Gentleman (The Music Lesson)* (fig. 2). Also, the checkerboard pattern of bricks and windows of the house on the opposite side of the street, seen through the open widow, echoes the emphatic geometrical design of the house in *The Little Street* (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam).

¹⁵ Robinson 1974 (note 14), p. 194, fig. 149.

¹⁶ W. Franits, *Dutch Seventeenth-Century Genre Painting. Its Stylistic and Thematic Evolution*, New Haven and London 2004, p. 238, already discussed some of the Vermeerian elements in De Man's painting.

¹⁷ *Couple Making Music*, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (P.J.J. van Thiel et al., *All the paintings of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. A completely illustrated catalogue*, Amsterdam-Maarssen 1976, p. 361, no. C151, ill.; *Two Men in an Office*, location unknown, last recorded on sale, Paris (Drouot), 24 June 1996, no. 33, ill.; *The Chess Players*, Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest (I. Ember and Z. Urbach (eds), *Museum of Fine Arts Budapest. Old Masters' Gallery. Summary Catalogue, Volume 2: Early Netherlandish, Dutch and Flemish Paintings*, Budapest 2000, p. 100, no. 320, ill.); *Interior with a Playing Cat*, location unknown, last recorded on sale, London (Christie's), 3 December 1997, no. 135, ill.; *Morning in Delft*, private collection, U.S.A. (Philadelphia-Berlin-London 1984 (note 10), p.

247, ill.); *A Man Giving a Letter to a Woman*, Museum d'Histoire Naturelle de Marseille (photograph at the RKD, The Hague); *Scholar at his Desk*, location unknown, last recorded, private collection, Rotterdam (photograph at the RKD, The Hague); *Scholar at His Desk with a Woman*, location unknown, last recorded sale, Berlin (Spik), 11-13 March 1982, no. 374, ill.

¹⁸ S.D. Kuretsky, *The Paintings of Jacob Ochtervelt (1634-1682)*, Montclair, N.J., 1979, p. 23, 25, 48, 80, 92.

¹⁹ Kuretsky 1979 (note 18), p. 92, under no. 94.

²⁰ *The Dancing Dog*, Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford, CT (Kuretsky 1979 (note 18), pp. 77-78, no. 57, fig. 55); *The Music Lesson*, The Art Institute of Chicago (Kuretsky 1979 (note 18), p. 80, no. 63, fig. 75); *The Nursery*, private collection, Cape Town (Kuretsky 1979 (note 18), p. 84, no. 73, fig. 84); *The Music Party* (pastiche after), location unknown (Kuretsky 1979 (note 18), p. 93, no. 94-A, fig. 106).

²¹ Sutton 1980 (note 2), p. 110, no. 118, pl. 121. The motif of a female virginal-player seen from the back recurs in one of the last paintings of De Hooch's career (Sutton 1980 (note 2), p. 119, no. 163, pl. 166), and also in a work of which the attribution to De Hooch is questionable (Sutton 1980 (note 2), p. 121, no. B4, pl. 169).

²² Sutton 1980 (note 2), pp. 110-111, no. 122, pl. 125. The dependence of De Hooch's *Couple with a Parrot* on Vermeer's work was first observed by W.R. Valentiner, 'Zum 300. Geburtstag Jan Vermeers, Oktober 1932. Vermeer und die Meister der holländischen Genremalerei', *Pantheon* X (1932), p. 308, and was later confirmed by Sutton 1980 (note 2), p. 39, 111. Another painting in which De Hooch drew inspiration of Vermeer was *Couple Playing Cards, with a Serving Woman* (Sutton 1980 (note 2), p. 110, no. 120, pl. 123), in which the disposition of the figures and the contrast between the spotlighted woman and the man in the shade call to mind *Officer and a Laughing Girl* (fig. 6). De Hooch's dependence on Vermeer in this work is remarkable, since the latter originally based the composition, the interior and the disposition of the figures in *An Officer and a Laughing Girl* on the former's *Soldiers Playing Cards* (Sutton 1980, p. 23 and P.C. Sutton in Dulwich and Hartford 1998-1999 (note 4), pp. 38-39).

²³ Montias 1989 (note 1), p. 308, no. 251.

²⁴ The connection between Ter Borch's painting and Vermeer was previously noticed by S.J. Gudlaugsson, *Gerard ter Borch*, The Hague 1959-1960, vol. I, pp. 162-163.

²⁵ Van Musscher's *The Artist's Studio*, dated 1690, is illustrated in E.J. Sluijter, 'Vermeer, Fame, and Female Beauty: The Art of Painting' in: I. Gaskell and M. Jonker (eds), *Vermeer studies*, Washington and New Haven 1998, p. 267, fig. 2. Even though Van Musscher altered the contents of the picture by having the artist portraying a gentleman, it is worth mentioning that the picture may be identical to a work described as "representing the art of painting" in Van Musscher's posthumous inventory (see Sluijter 1998, p. 266), which is virtually the same as the way Vermeer's *Art of Painting* was described in a notarial document of 24 February 1676 drawn up on behalf of Catharina Bolnes (Montias 1989 (note 1), pp. 338-339, no. 363).

²⁶ This painting was recently acquired by Prince Hans-Adam of Lichtenstein and is illustrated in *The Art News*, XVI, no. 181 (June 2007), p. 4.

²⁷ On this portrait, see M. Russell, 'The Artist in His Studio: A Self-Portrait by Michiel van Musscher', *Apollo*, January 1988, pp. 9-15, pl. 1.

²⁸ E. Haverkamp-Begemann, in *Apollo*, March 1980, p. 180, fig. 9. Van Deuren may also have been responsible for another depiction of a young astronomer in the same posture as *The Milkmaid* (N. MacLaren and (revised by) C. Brown, *National Gallery Catalogues. The Dutch School 1600-1900*, London 1991, vol. I, pp. 102-103, no. 2589, vol. II, pl. 87). A whitish back wall with a map confirms the connection to Vermeer's work.

²⁹ For a comprehensive description of the various attributions of this painting, see MacLaren and Brown 1991 (note 28), vol. I, pp. 99-101, no. 2552, vol. II, pl. 86. The current museum attribution of the painting, which originates from MacLaren and Brown 1991, p. 99, is 'Delft, probably 1660-5', which, logical as it may seem, is not entirely correct. As we have seen, many works inspired by Vermeer were painted by artists from other Dutch cities. Moreover, the painting includes elements that can be linked to artists who were not active in Delft. The main figure group, for instance, is a variation

on Ter Borch's *A Couple Drinking Wine with a Page* (Gudlaugsson 1959-1960 (note 24), vol. I, pp. 135-136, no. 122, ill.), whereas the interior with its marble floor, mimicking that of the then newly built Town Hall in Amsterdam, is indebted to works by Gabriel Metsu (Robinson 1974 (note 14), p. 178, fig. 130) and Pieter de Hooch (e.g. Sutton 1980 (note 2), p. 97, no. 66, pl. 71). None of these artists lived in Delft in the 1660s. Another two pictures inspired by Vermeer, but which have never been attributed satisfactorily are: *An Officer Holding a Rifle in front of a Window*, once described in *The Illustrated London News* (June 3, 1922 (809)) as "The 4000-Guinea 'Vermeer'", and last recorded in the sale of Robinson, Fisher and Harding, London (Willis's), 11 May 1922, no. 146, where it was bought by dealer Frank T. Sabin. This painting also includes the quotation of a woman seen from the back in front of a virginal. *A Merry Company at a Table* (Kuretsky 1979 (note 18), p. 100, D-6, fig. 171), formerly attributed to Ochtervelt, is an early pastiche of at least two works by Vermeer. The female drinker is taken from *The Glass of Wine* (Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin), whereas the melancholic man derives from *The Girl with the Wineglass* (Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig).

³⁰ For an estimation of the total number of paintings Vermeer painted between 1656 and 1675, see, for instance, Montias 1989 (note 1), pp. 265-267.

³¹ On Van Ruyven's collection of works by Vermeer and its subsequent history, see Montias 1989 (note 1), pp. 246-257.

³² B. de Monconys, *Journal des voyages: Enrichi de quantité de figures en taille-douce/de Monconys*, Paris 1667, vol. II, p. 149. See also Montias 1989 (note 1), pp. 180-181.

³³ Among others, Sluijter 1998 (note 25), p. 265, and W. Liedtke in W. Liedtke et al., *Vermeer and the Delft School*, exh. cat. New York (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)/ London (National Gallery) 2001, p. 394.

³⁴ Since the Delft art market in the early eighteenth century was a regional entity, the only likely reason why it would have come on auction there is if the painting derived from a Delft collection.

³⁵ Kuretsky 1979 (note 18), p. 100, D-6, fig. 171.

³⁶ In the 1630s-1640s, Pieter Codde (1599-1678) repeatedly painted a composition with a woman at a virginal seen from the back (see e.g. P.C. Sutton, *Love Letters: Dutch Genre Painting in the Age of Vermeer*, exh. cat. Dublin (National Gallery of Ireland)/ Greenwich, CT (Bruce Museum of Arts and Science) 2003-2004, pp. 85-87, no. 3, ill.). However, the instrument is not placed parallel to the picture plane and the horizontal lines of the keyboard do not strengthen the verticality of the woman in front,

which are precisely the characteristics that painters adopted from Vermeer's paintings (I am grateful to Louise Kelly for bringing Codde's composition to my attention).

³⁷ Van Hoogstraten's painting from the Blathwyt collection, Dyrham Park, Gloucestershire is illustrated and described in P. Marijnissen et al., *De Zichtbare Werelt*, exh. cat. Dordrecht (Dordrechts Museum) 1992-1993, pp. 196-199, no. 45, ill.; Van Hoogstraten had previously included a mirror reflecting the image of a chair in his famous *Peep-show* (National Gallery, London) from 1655-1660.

³⁸ See P.C. Sutton, 'Love Letters: Dutch Genre Painting in the Age of Vermeer', in Dublin and Greenwich 2003-2004 (note 36), p. 14-49.

³⁹ *A View of Delft* was sold for 200 guilders (G. Hoet, *Catalogus of naamlyst van schilderyen [...]*, The Hague 1752, vol. I, p. 35, no. 31).

⁴⁰ B.P.J. Broos, "Un celebre Peijntre nommé Verme[c]r" in: B.P.J. Broos, et al., *Johannes Vermeer*, exh. cat., Washington (National Gallery of Art)/ The Hague (Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis) 1995-1996, pp. 48-50.