



# PRESS RELEASE

from

## THE FRICK COLLECTION

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### ***VERMEER, REMBRANDT, AND HALS*** ***MASTERPIECES OF DUTCH PAINTING FROM THE MAURITSHUIS***

October 22, 2013, through January 19, 2014



Johannes Vermeer (1632–1675), *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, c. 1665, oil on canvas, Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, The Hague

This fall and winter, The Frick Collection will be the final venue of an American tour of paintings from the Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, The Hague. ***Vermeer, Rembrandt, and Hals: Masterpieces of Dutch Painting from the Mauritshuis*** will be on view in New York from October 22, 2013, through January 19, 2014. The prestigious Dutch museum has not lent a large body of works in nearly thirty years, and the fifteen paintings selected for the Frick's presentation are among the most important in the Mauritshuis's holdings. They represent the remarkable achievements of northern artists in the seventeenth century and complement the Frick's strengths in Dutch portraits, landscapes, and genre paintings. Johannes Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring*—which has not been shown in New York since 1984—will have pride of place as the sole picture in the museum's Oval Room. Paintings by Frans Hals, Pieter Claesz, Rembrandt,

Gerard ter Borch, Carel Fabritius, Jan Steen, Jacob van Ruisdael, Nicolaes Maes, and Adriaen Coorte will be displayed in the adjacent East Gallery. Additionally, *Transforming Still Life Painting* (2012) by contemporary British artists Rob and Nick Carter will be shown in the Frick's Multimedia Room. This digital work, also on loan from the Mauritshuis, will offer visitors an opportunity to consider the enduring influence that Dutch Old Masters continue to have on artists today. The Frick's three canvases by Vermeer will be presented together in a special installation in the adjacent West Gallery, and the exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue, a series of public programs, and select free evening hours.

The paintings to be presented at The Frick Collection were chosen by Colin B. Bailey, former Deputy Director and Peter Jay Sharp Chief Curator at the Frick, in consultation with the Mauritshuis. ***Vermeer, Rembrandt, and Hals: Masterpieces of Dutch Painting from the Mauritshuis*** is organized by Margaret Iacono, Assistant Curator at the Frick. Major Funding for the New York exhibition is provided by The Peter Jay Sharp Foundation, Assael Inc., John

and Constance Birkelund, and Fiduciary Trust Company International. Additional support is generously provided by Margot and Jerry Bogert, Michael and Jane Horvitz, Walter and Vera Eberstadt, Agnes Gund, Seymour R. Askin, Barbara Fleischman, and an anonymous gift in memory of Melvin R. Seiden. The exhibition is also supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

## **ABOUT THE ROYAL PICTURE GALLERY MAURITSHUIS AND THE INTERNATIONAL TOUR**

The Mauritshuis's legendary collection contains more than 800 paintings, the majority of which were created during the seventeenth century in the northern and southern Netherlands. Its core comes from the collection of Stadholder Prince William V of Orange-Nassau, who assembled an outstanding group of pictures in addition to inheriting a trove of masterpieces from his predecessors. This magnificent legacy was given to the Dutch nation in 1816 by his son, William I. The Mauritshuis's collection is housed in the city palace of Johan Maurits, Count of Nassau-Siegen. The majestic building—built between 1633 and 1644 and a breathtaking example of Dutch classicist architecture—is undergoing an expansion and refurbishment and is expected to reopen in mid-2014. The project has occasioned an ambitious international tour allowing foreign audiences to enjoy a selection of the Mauritshuis's treasures. Following larger presentations in Japan at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum and the Kobe City Museum, and in the U.S. at the de Young/Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, the exhibition travels to the Frick before making a final appearance in Bologna, Italy, at the Palazzo Fava (February and May 2014).

## **SUBJECTS THAT ENGAGED ARTISTS' AND COLLECTORS' IMAGINATIONS DURING THE DUTCH GOLDEN AGE**

More than simply a selection of highlights from a renowned museum, the exhibition focuses on the subjects that engaged artists' and collectors' imaginations during the Dutch Golden Age. Over the course of the seventeenth century, the nation would rise to become one of the wealthiest and most powerful in the world, employing its naval prowess to dominate international trade and create a vast colonial empire. This newfound prosperity engendered great advancements in the sciences and the arts. Although the Protestant Reformation had severely diminished Church sponsorship of art, the governing regents, burgomasters, members of various civic groups, and a burgeoning mercantile class proved to be zealous patrons. With surplus income, Dutch citizens enthusiastically purchased paintings and works of decorative arts. An enormous surge in art production followed—in a variety of types and levels of quality—which can scarcely be imagined today. Some scholars estimate that surviving art from the period may represent as little as one to ten percent of the total amount produced.

The paintings selected for the Frick's exhibition reveal something of the character of the Dutch people. We learn what they valued—their native land, industrious labor, modesty in comportment—and what they scorned—indolence and disorder. With increasing demand for paintings, subjects less common in the previous century became more widely embraced, among them landscapes, genre scenes, and still lifes. Artists began to specialize in particular types of paintings in order to increase their production and distinguish

themselves as experts. Despite this proliferation of new themes, many artists and academics continued to extol the old hierarchy of subject matter—derived from sixteenth-century art theory—which valued history paintings most highly.

## REMBRANDT'S *SUSANNA*

Included in the category of history painting are subjects from classical history, mythology, and the Bible. Since these pictures most often took their inspiration from literary sources, their execution was viewed as a challenging and intellectual endeavor. Rembrandt, not surprisingly, aspired to history painting, and his poignant *Susanna* of 1636 is an example of his brilliance in this genre. While historical paintings were commonly presented on large supports, Rembrandt opted to render this subject in a small-scale format. Unfolding before us is a gripping scene from the story of Susanna, who is spied on by a pair of Babylonian elders, as described in the book of Daniel (13:19–23). Rembrandt concentrates his attention on the anguished heroine, banishing the unscrupulous intruders to the right margin of the picture, where they are largely

hidden by a jumble of foliage. Susanna is portrayed as an attractive young woman, although her dimpled body is unidealized, as the indentations made by her stockings on her calves make clear. Looking toward us—either in search of assistance or in fear—with swollen, tear-filled eyes and reddened nose, she desperately tries to shield her naked body, which Rembrandt describes with a mixture of heavily impastoed pinks, whites, oranges, and grays. Her vulnerability is palpable yet she exhibits a dignity that suggests her honorable character. In addition to his superlative portrayal of human emotion, Rembrandt entralls us with his bravura handling of paint—alternating between extravagantly encrusted layers to model Susanna's figure and thinly painted passages to construct the background—and nuanced chiaroscuro. Three other works by Rembrandt—of the more typical portrait genre—are included in the special exhibition, including the canvas at left. Visitors also may enjoy three paintings by the artist from the Frick's permanent collection, displayed in the nearby West Gallery.



Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669), *Susanna*, 1636, oil on panel, Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, The Hague



Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669), "Tronie" of a Man with a Feathered Beret, c. 1635, oil on panel, Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, The Hague

## PORTRAITS AND *TRONIES*

Many artists aspired to be history painters but a lack of patronage for these subjects often compelled them to undertake portrait painting. There was a steady clientele eager to own canvases that recorded important occasions, celebrated personal status, and glorified public figures. The more gifted artists used their talents to make substantive creative and technical contributions to the genre. Frans Hals, one of the period's chief portraitists, depicted a nineteen-year-old bride, Aletta Hanemans, in 1625 to commemorate her marriage the previous year to the twenty-nine-year-old beer brewer and burgomaster Jacob



Frans Hals (1582/3–1666), *Portrait of Aletta Hanemans (1606–1653)*, 1625, oil on canvas, Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, The Hague

Olycan. Aletta's prominent wedding ring and the pair of bridal gloves she clasps underscore the connubial theme. The portraits remained in the Olycan family until they were sold to the Mauritshuis in 1881. Treatment in 2006–7 to remove discolored inpainting revealed Hals's superlative rendering of the pair's silk garments, which are trimmed with expensive lace and gold brocade inspired by Spanish fashions. Such exquisite detail and meticulous description were common in Hals's early work and accorded with contemporary requisites for portraiture. Visitors will find three portraits by Hals on view in the Frick's permanent collection galleries as well.

Sometimes mistaken for a portrait, Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, an oil on canvas painted about 1665, belongs to a distinctly Dutch subcategory of portraiture known as the *tronie*, a type of picture popularized in the 1630s by Rembrandt and other artists. *Tronies* represented stock characters and depicted idealized faces or exaggerated expressions, with subjects frequently sporting exotic costumes. Unlike commissioned portraits, *tronies* were sold on the open market. Although the girl's features may have been inspired by a live model, we have no idea who she was, and Vermeer would not have felt her identity relevant to our enjoyment of the work. The blue and yellow cloths tied to form her turban-like head wrap and even the conspicuous, shimmering pearl hint that the sitter is a product of the artist's imagination. These props most likely were meant to convey an air of the exotic. It is perhaps the unanswerable questions surrounding this image—Who was the model? To whom does she turn to address? How did she come to possess the exquisite pearl?—that intrigue us so. All of Vermeer's characteristic and finest mannerisms are evident here. The painting exhibits the gentle stillness intrinsic to his works and is a tour de force in the myriad ways that light plays on the various textures and surfaces depicted. It draws us to the girl's eyes, her flawlessly smooth skin and moist lips, the folds in the cloth concealing her hair, the coarse fabric of her clothing, and the glistening, heavy pearl dangling provocatively above her stiff white collar. Vermeer's decision to position his figure against a darkened, uninhabited background leaves us nowhere else to look but at the luminous young woman.

Purchased by the art collector Arnoldus des Tombe in 1881 for the astoundingly low price of two guilders plus a buyer's premium of thirty cents, Vermeer's *Girl* was subsequently displayed at the Mauritshuis and officially entered the museum's collection upon Des Tombe's death in 1902. Visitors to the exhibition will have the opportunity to consider the three paintings by Vermeer in the Frick's permanent collection, which will be grouped together in the West Gallery in honor of the *Girl's* visit. Henry Clay Frick purchased the pictures between 1901 and 1919 (though none was quite the bargain realized by Des Tombe). Unlike the *Girl*, the Frick Vermeers are genre scenes. Despite their differing subject matter, all four works demonstrate the master's consummate rendering of light and tantalize us with questions about his subjects' identities, their relationships, and the circumstances in which they are shown.

## **INSPIRATION FROM DAILY ACTIVITIES**

Like history painters, genre painters sought to edify; instead of heroic pursuits, however, these artists looked to common daily activities for inspiration. Eschewing battlefields and ancient cityscapes, they preferred contemporary domestic interiors as the settings for their pictures. Their narratives were not intended as journalistic records of quotidian life but were clearly studio inventions. Using a large canvas support—comparable in size to those generally



Jan Steen (1626–1679). “As the Old Sing, So Pipe the Young”, oil on canvas, Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, The Hague

used for historical subjects—Jan Steen presents his droll painting “*As the Old Sing, So Pipe the Young*.” Taking a Dutch proverb as his theme, Steen depicts errant adult behavior to warn of its effect on impressionable offspring. Ostensibly gathered to celebrate the baptism of the baby at the center of the painting (who is nearly concealed by the lavishly spread table), the rowdy ensemble appears more interested in the festivities than in the religious purpose occasioning the celebration. An elderly woman holds a sheet of paper containing the words to a popular song, which is referenced in the painting’s title. She sings aloud, presumably to the music played by the bagpiper at far right. In a playful stroke of self-mockery, Steen portrays

himself as the jovial figure teaching the boy to smoke. Punctuating the composition are symbols that underscore the picture’s theme and that would have immediately been recognized by Steen’s contemporaries. The bagpiper, for instance, alludes to the “copycat piping” referenced in the Dutch proverb; the instrument itself connotes indolence and debauchery. The foot warmer and the oysters had erotic associations, and the parrot was an obvious symbol of mimicry. The painting reveals Steen’s deft handling of paint and dazzling use of color to suggest a variety of textures and surfaces, seen, for example, in the superbly rendered still life at center. Steen again references sensual pleasures in his *Oyster Eater*, wherein the young woman’s salting of the shellfish hints at her wantonness. Like oysters, salt was thought to enhance desire. The glass of wine and the presence of the bed confirm the girl’s intentions, as do her direct gaze and sly smile: she is offering herself. She carefully prepares the mollusk, not for her own consumption but to tempt the viewer. This captivating oil on panel is the smallest painting in Steen’s oeuvre. Visitors to the exhibition can observe how the artist fluently adapted his technique to suit the scale of his works, alternating between the painstaking strokes of a miniaturist for this diminutive panel and a less precise, painterly style for the immense “...*So Pipe the Young*.”



Jan Steen (1626–1679), *The Oyster Eater*, c. 1658–60, oil on panel, Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, The Hague

## SWEEPING PANORAMAS AND INTIMATE STILL LIFES



Jacob van Ruisdael (1628?–1682), *View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds*, c. 1670–1675, oil on canvas, Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, The Hague

Landscape paintings were first produced as independent subjects in Flanders during the sixteenth century, and the genre would mature and flourish during the Golden Age under the observing eyes and skilled brushes of Dutch painters such as Jacob van Ruisdael, the consummate Dutch landscape artist. *View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds* is a splendid panegyric of the sun-drenched countryside and the city’s valued linen industry. The composition is described from an unusually high viewpoint with certain geographical features selectively moved or omitted by the artist to suit his aesthetic taste. The distinctive, flat topography of the lowlands is immediately recognizable as are many of the buildings—such as

the imposing Cathedral of Saint Bavo—silhouetted against a cloudy sky. The painting belongs to a category of images known as *Haerlempjes* (little views of Haarlem), a term already in use during the late seventeenth century. Although Ruisdael repeatedly depicted his native city from afar, he never rendered life within its walls.

From sweeping panoramas to intimate still lifes, Dutch artists depicted the world around them with great acuity. In his remarkable *Goldfinch*—a still life or a portrait depending on how one wishes to interpret it—Carel Fabritius uses a minimum of quick strokes to portray the tiny house pet’s downy body as well as the coarsely plastered wall that serves as a background. Such expert manipulation of paint to suggest form and texture may have been assimilated from Rembrandt, with whom Fabritius studied between 1641 and 1643. Although the young master would die in 1654 following a gunpowder explosion that leveled a considerable part of Delft (and probably destroyed much of Fabritius’s oeuvre), his pristine lighting and composed tranquility would be echoed in the works of Vermeer, his contemporary. Very fittingly, Fabritius’s painting was installed beneath Vermeer’s *Girl with a Pearl Earring* upon its acquisition in 1896 by former Mauritshuis director Abraham Bredius. Whatever the panel’s initial purpose—suggestions include a component of a birdcage or a cover for an encased painting—one can well imagine that the little bird chained to his feed box deceived countless viewers. Indeed, Fabritius’s *trompe l’oeil* masterpiece is today regarded as one of the greatest examples of illusionism of all time.



Carel Fabritius (1622–1654), *The Goldfinch*, 1654, oil on panel, Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, The Hague



Pieter Claesz (1596/7–1660), *Vanitas Still Life*, 1630, oil on panel, Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, The Hague

The intense desire of Dutch Golden Age artists and patrons to record likenesses—of themselves, objects, and land—reveals an acute preoccupation with life’s transience. *Vanitas* pictures were a subcategory of still-life painting that first appeared around 1600. Derived from the Latin word for “vanity,” the *vanitas* image reminded viewers of life’s brevity by depicting objects such as skulls, snuffed candles, and hourglasses. Pieter Claesz’s *Vanitas Still Life* is a haunting example. A leading still-life painter active in Haarlem, Claesz uses a sober monochromatic palette to create the skull and bones, timepiece, overturned goblet, and extinguished oil lamp that make up this bleak ensemble. The quill pen that rests atop the collection of papers suggests man’s vain attempt to record knowledge. Despite the painting’s wary exhortation against objects of the material world, one cannot resist savoring Claesz’s treatment of the glittering timepiece with its glossy blue ribbon, the sparkling reflections on the glass, the brittle pages, and the jagged fractures and crevices of the skull.

## A CONTEMPORARY LOAN FROM THE MAURITSHUIS INVITES A FRESH DIALOGUE



Still from Rob and Nick Carter, *Transforming Still Life Painting*, 2012, 3-hour looped film, frame and Apple Mac, Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, The Hague, © Rob and Nick Carter

As a fascinating codicil to the presentation of paintings from the Mauritshuis, the Frick will present *Transforming Still Life Painting*, Rob and Nick Carter's modern rejoinder to the *vanitas* tradition. The artists use Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder's *Vase with Flowers in a Window* of about 1618 (a painting in the Mauritshuis's collection but too fragile to be included in the traveling exhibition) as their inspiration. Bosschaert's famous image features a vase of fastidiously described flowers displayed on a windowsill, behind which a blue sky and picturesque landscape are visible. Yet it, too, is a reminder of the ephemeral nature of living things. Presented in the Frick's Multimedia Room on a computer screen surrounded by a simple dark frame, much like those favored by the Dutch during the seventeenth century, the Carters' mesmerizing film literally transforms the still-life genre by animating the *nature morte*. Over the

course of three hours, Bosschaert's image changes gradually before our eyes: flowers wither, insects devour the tender foliage, and darkness descends over the distant mountains and river. Like Bosschaert's painting, which urged viewers to consider the future of the delicate bouquet, the film (which makes its U.S. debut with this exclusive New York showing) depicts the transient nature of earthly existence, a timeless message conveyed by modern means.

## PUBLICATIONS AND RELATED GIFT ITEMS OFFERED IN ADDITIONAL SHOP SPACE



For the first time, the Frick will open an additional Museum Shop space within the building. There, visitors will find gift items inspired by the special exhibition. The shop will also carry a rich array of publications on art of the Dutch Golden Age, among them an exhibition catalogue (currently available) that guides readers through the highlights of the Mauritshuis's magnificent collection. *Girl with a Pearl Earring: Dutch Paintings from the Mauritshuis* features thirty-five masterpieces of portraiture, landscape, genre painting, history, and still-life. Each painting is illuminated by a text about its context and significance. Essays provide an overview of the extraordinary world of the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, explore the history and future of the

Mauritshuis building and collection, offer an in-depth look at Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, and chronicle fascinating conservation treatments and technical research undertaken by the museum. Authors are Mauritshuis staff members Director Emilie E. S. Gordenker, Senior Curator Quentin Buvelot, Curator Lea van der Vinde, Curator Ariane van Suchtelen, and Head of Paintings Conservation Petria Noble. Lynne Federle Orr, former Curator in Charge of European Art at the de Young /Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, the tour's first U.S. venue, also contributed an essay. The book was published by the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and Del Monico Books, Prestel (hardcover, 144 pages; \$34.95, Member Price: \$31.46). Publications and gift items available in the Museum Shop may also be ordered through the Frick's Web site ([www.frick.org](http://www.frick.org)) and by phone at 212.547.6848.

## TIMED-TICKETING INFORMATION

*Vermeer, Rembrandt, and Hals: Masterpieces of Dutch Painting from the Mauritshuis* is included with paid museum admission. However, timed tickets are required, and purchasing them in advance is strongly advised. As of July, timed tickets have been available for purchase at the Admissions Desk during museum hours. They can also be ordered online at [www.frick.org](http://www.frick.org) or by calling Telecharge at 212.239.6200 (for a small processing fee). Subject to availability during the run of the exhibition, same-day and advance timed tickets may also be obtained at the Frick. For more information about purchasing tickets, please visit the Frick's Web site.

As a benefit of membership, museum members will be given priority access and may view the special exhibition without pre-purchasing timed tickets. Individuals interested in becoming members can do so online, in person when visiting the Frick, or by calling the Membership Department at 212.547.0709.

**An extensive series of public programs will be offered as well as select FREE Friday evenings for the public (supported by Agnes Gund) and special nights for Members. Please consult the Web site for details: <http://www.frick.org/programs>.**

## BASIC INFORMATION

**General Information Phone:** 212.288.0700

**Web site:** [www.frick.org](http://www.frick.org)

**E-mail:** [info@frick.org](mailto:info@frick.org)

**Where:** 1 East 70th Street, near Fifth Avenue

**Hours: open six days a week:** 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Tuesdays through Saturdays; 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Sundays. Closed Mondays, New Year's Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. Limited hours (11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) on Lincoln's Birthday, Election Day, and Veterans Day (special hours for the run of the exhibition, specific to those galleries, will be posted online)

**Admission:** \$20; senior citizens \$15; students \$10; "pay what you wish" on Sundays from 11 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

**This special exhibition is included with paid museum admission. However timed tickets are required. See notes above and the Web site regarding purchasing tickets as well as the priority entry that Members receive.**

**PLEASE NOTE TO YOUR READERS: Children under ten are not admitted to the Collection.**

**Subway:** #6 local (on Lexington Avenue) to 68th Street station; **Bus:** M1, M2, M3, and M4 southbound on Fifth Avenue to 72nd Street and northbound on Madison Avenue to 70th Street

**Tour Information:** included in the price of admission is an Acoustiguide Audio Tour of the permanent collection. The tour is offered in six languages: English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish. During the run of the exhibition, paintings from the special exhibition will be discussed on the English version of the audio guide.

**Museum Shop:** the shop is open the same days as the Museum, closing fifteen minutes before the institution.

**Group Admission for the Permanent Collection:** Please call 212.288.0700 for details and to make reservations.

**Public Programs:** A calendar of events is published regularly and all content is available online.

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For further press information, please contact Heidi Rosenau, Head of Media Relations & Marketing or Alexis Light, Manager of Media Relations & Marketing

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