Johannes Vermeer’s Art of Painting

But the reality of art is not the reality of reality.
William Roscoe

Proemium

Johannes Vermeer’s most important and most interesting work is the Art of Painting (fig. 1). This painting is important because it is one of the few examples in which a seventeenth-century Dutchman shares his views concerning the art of painting. It is interesting because this occurs, by way of exception, in a manner that can be traced by the art historian of the twentieth century at a number of different levels.

The iconography is by now familiar. Still, it may be useful to begin by distinguishing two of the most obvious levels. First, we are shown a rich interior with a marble floor, a tapestry curtain, a rich brass chandelier, furniture, and two strikingly attired figures posing as a painter and his model. At the next level, there is a good deal more to be said. I shall describe this level briefly and then return to it in greater depth.

Let us take it from left to right. The tapestry curtain may have reminded educated seventeenth-century viewers, especially as the room contains a man painting, of the contest between Zeuxis and Parrhasios. The objects on the table have been interpreted as allusions to the academic program of training for painters: cloth, the texture and coloring of which can only be captured with certain natural aptitude, drawn, and the plaster cast of a face. The necessary skill through prae doctrina. I do not believe that intended as a mask to convey the nature of painting. This would constitute a point of allegory, a point to be taken up later.

As for the man, it is clear that ordinary painter. The room is for a studio, and the man shall we say, unusual. (See Marijnissen’s discussion of his dress elsewhere.) This leaves the young woman to be posing as a model again the intention is not to relieve the highly unlikely that any model down with heavy objects, would posing at an early stage; the whitewash underdrawing have only just been the panel. We know how models at different stages elements of dressing times being painted with the use of, for instance, and studies in detail being made from separate parts of attributive objects.

Hence we appear at first to be from a model in progress, yet on closer examination this proves illusory: the model but a metaphor. She has flown as the muse Clio, and as such
Vermeer, Fame, and Female Beauty: The Art of Painting

A painting by Johannes Vermeer has elicited so many penetrating interpretations during the last half century as the Art of Painting (fig. 1). In most discussions of this high point of Vermeer's oeuvre, the allegorical significance of the young woman, the painter's model, has been pivotal. Karl Gunnar Hultén in 1949 was the first to point out that she has the attributes of the muse Clio, as described in Cesare Ripa's Iconologia.1 Ever since Jan van Gelder expanded upon Hultén's observations in a lecture published in 1958 (with annotations by Jan Emmens),2 the woman has been identified as representing the muse of history.3 In my opinion, this has put many scholars on the wrong track.

Van Gelder's conclusions have frequently been repeated or elaborated. He argued that because Clio is the muse of history, the artist is painting history, the representation of which was considered the ultimate aim of the art of painting; and because Clio is a muse—one of the goddesses who inspire the arts—the painter is also presenting himself as being inspired by history.4 This interpretation was so convincing that, like many others, Bob Haak, in his invaluable survey of seventeenth-century Dutch art, summed it up as follows: "There can be no question about the meaning of Vermeer's painting of an artist in his studio. . . . Real as it looks, the scene is in fact an allegory and the painter a personification responding to the highest calling of his art, that of painting inspired by history".5

Apart from his two earliest known Vermeer paintings, with the utmost intensity, subjects that are related to any form of inspiration! Thus it is highly unlikely that he represented this concept in a pictorial manner about the art of painting. Therefore the relationship between painting and history is in some way, however complicated and forced, an important bearing on the main picture.6 In my view this has not received the consideration or been incorporated into the interpretation of the subject of his painting.

We know that the description of Clio's subject as the Art of Painting came from Vermeer himself. In 1654, one year before his death, he wrote to his former pupil and later in-law, Johannes van der Meer, that he might be able to paint something on the subject of the Art of Painting.7 From the surviving letters, dealing with his wife's efforts to sell this painting in the family after his death, we may assume that she had been to use it to promote his art.8 Vermeer's most likely painted this piece for himself in order to have a magnificent example of his
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Apart from his two earliest known works, Vermeer painted, with the utmost conviction and intensity, subjects that are totally unrelated to any form of inspiration by history. Thus it is highly unlikely that he would have represented this concept in a pictorial statement about the art of painting. The assumption that the relationship between the art of painting and history is in some way central to the subject of the painting, however, has led to rather complicated and forced interpretations. Although some authors have acknowledged that the fame proclaimed by Clio has an important bearing on the meaning of the picture, in my view this has not received due consideration or been incorporated into a convincing interpretation of the subject of the painting.

We know that the description of the picture’s subject as the Art of Painting probably came from Vermeer himself; in legal documents drawn up by his wife and his mother-in-law after Vermeer’s death, it is mentioned twice as “a painting in which is represented the Art of Painting.” From the same documents, dealing with his wife’s efforts to keep this painting in the family after the artist’s death, we may assume that she—as well as her deceased husband—had been particularly attached to it.

Vermeer most likely painted this masterpiece for himself in order to have an outstanding specimen of his art in his studio. With such a magnificent example of his abilities he
would no longer disappoint important visitors, as was the case with the French connoisseur and diplomat Baltasar de Monconys in 1663, to whom Vermeer could not show a single painting. *The Art of Painting* was probably one of the works Pieter Teeling van Berchout admired when he visited Vermeer’s studio in 1669. In this context it is interesting to note that the inventory drawn up after the death of the painter Michael van Musscher in 1705 describes a painting in his studio of exactly the same subject, “representing the art of painting,” which seems to have been intended for display in or in front of the painter’s workshop. This picture may have resembled Van Musscher’s painting of an artist in his studio of 1650 (fig. 2), a work obviously inspired by Vermeer.11

Let us first consider what Vermeer might have wanted the informed viewer to understand immediately when pondering the subject of the painting. The beholder’s attention is first drawn to the painter and his model. He sees an anonymous painter seated before his easel and looking at a model wearing a fanciful costume, crowned by a laurel wreath, and carrying a trumpet in her right hand and a large book in her left. The model and the laurel—familiar attributes in allegorical portraits—would immediately have been understood as references to fame and everlasting honor and glory and, in combination with these, the book as denoting that the fame and glory will be recorded and preserved forever in the chronicles of history. While the painter has already drawn the contours of the figure—a half-figure—it is the laurel wreath that the artist is capturing in paint on his canvas; the laurel wreath that stays forever fresh, the sign of being lauded with eternal honor and glory.

Even should the beholder recognize the model’s attire as that of Clio, this will not have changed the impression that the painting is primarily about fame, glory, and honor, in relation, naturally, to the art of painting. In his 1644 Dutch edition of Rija’s *Iconologia*, Duk Pieteres Pers translated Clio’s name in the caption of the section devoted to this muse as “Honor-Fame” [Ere-Room]. She is thus the muse of Honor-Fame, whose name Rija explains is derived from the Greek word klio, to praise, and from kloos, which means honor, or “the celebration of the things about which she sings.”14

Karel van Mander wrote in the *Witgeleuglijen der Metamorphosis* (1604) that, as kloos indicates, Clio stands for “desire for honor, or ambition and fame” (“ersucht, oft eeregeheyt en roem”), therefore she is “an incentive to learning.” Like Rija, Van Mander noted that it was Clio’s invention to describe history.15 Also in seventeenth-century poems featuring the muses, Clio is sometimes simply named “ertzucht,” the desire for fame.16 Finally, in Franciscus Junius’ learned treatise about painting from classical antiquity, Clio is again described as the first muse, whose name means sound reputation and fame. Junius went on to say that she represents the initial stimulus that incites us to learn, as one primarily chooses to practice the arts to enhance one’s honor.17 Hence she is the muse who proclaims honor and fame, and therefore the one who stimulates the learning and practice of the arts to the best of one’s abilities. Furthermore, the writing of history is her invention, as it is a means of recording honor and fame for posterity.

To assume that in Vermeer’s painting the female figure with the attributes of Clio represents history,18 referring to the notion that the artist should endeavor to depict history or should be inspired by history [history as meaning human events and deeds from the past as recorded in textual sources],19 is beside the point. Moreover, I do not think that Vermeer, by way of this motif, reveals his adherence to the idea that the painter should consider history painting, the painting of a historia in the art-theoretical sense, as his highest goal.20 It is also unlikely that the painting depicts the muse of history to derive an aspiration to record the higher t he human mind,21 nor does Clio refer to the history of the Neth. Finally—to end this rough outline of interpretations in which some of history occupies an important place—think that the juxtaposition of the woman as Clio and the map behind it can be seen as a comparison of two different pictorial representations and historical allusions, one by means of allegory, through visual description.22

The painter has before him a muse and the attributes of everlasting fame, honor, and through his art this model, the painted image of the muse will aspire to these qualities, painting itself records and proclaims honor and of his art: “Art creates: Fame proclaims her glory,” as Adria Yen lost in a poem that sings of honor and of his art.23 The painter is depicting Clio, the muse of history, symbol of immortality and knowledge; through his art, he is able to record in a painting everything that is true, both the painter and the object of the forever to be praised. As Philips Angel at the end of his little treatise *In Painting*: “Through our art we shall survive from the veracity of mortal life in spite of death—the strange things—and shall flourish from on to the next without withering.”24

The sentence encompasses the consonant notions that the painter’s art has mortality and death by capturing the transient, and that the painter himself will endure.25

Thoughts about fame and honor to the artist and his art, an enhancement of the glory of his city, must have been quite pervasive among ambitious painters in this period.26 Considered “the Embellishments of the Land . . . the adornment of Fame” (as the printer of Philips Angel) described the painters,27 obviously to them. Karel van Mander published in 1644 to record the honor of the art of painting and its
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The painter has before him a model with the
attributes of everlasting fame, glory, and
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the artist to aspire to these qualities, while the
painting itself records and proclaims the fame
and honor of his art: "Art creates Fame and
Fame proclaims her glory," as Adriaen van de
Venne stated in a poem that sings the praises
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withering laurel, symbol of immortal honor
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Thoughts about fame and honor in relation
to the artist and his art, particularly as an
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Van Bleyswijck tells us that, in addition to Karel van Mander's Lives, his sources were the recently published book by Cornelis de Bie, The Golden Gallery of the Noble and Liberal Art of Painting, 47 and information from several people who were knowledgeable in the arts. It is, I think, entirely possible that Vermeer was one of them. Vermeer would certainly have known the publisher Arnold, who had his business on the market square, only a few steps from Van Mander's studio. It was Arnold who wrote the laudatory poem on the death of Carol Fabritius that was included in Van Bleyswijck's book and ended with the well-known analogy that from the fire of this phoenix Vermeer arose to succeed Fabritius. Bleyswijck's poem included the famous description of Van Bleyswijck's book, the first lines of the poem were printed in two versions, Albert Blankert suggested that Vermeer himself allowed Bleyswijck to change these lines during the printing process. 48, the second version places greater emphasis on the fact that Vermeer not only succeeded Fabritius but actually surpassed him. Bleyswijck's book Descrip- tion of the City of Delft of 1667, introduced the painters as follows: "Let us con- sider now which famous painters, sculptors, and other excellent artists who compete with nature our city has also produced and reared, and who have, here and in many other places in the world, exhibited and left their work to their everlasting remembrance." 49 Unlike Bleyswijck, Van Bleyswijck did not discuss the lives and works of living artists, but only mentioned the names, including, of course, that of Vermeer. However, he introduced this en- 

ience and deserved laudation can be demonstrated by the highly esteemed paintings one encounters both in and outside Leiden. They are therefore deserving and worthy of being written about and chronicled in all the books of eulogy and history. 50

Similar sentiments were often repeated: for instance, Dirck van Bleyswijck, in his Description of the City of Delft of 1667, introduced the painters as follows: "Let us consider now which famous painters, sculptors, and other excellent artists who compete with nature our city has also produced and reared, and who have, here and in many other places in the world, exhibited and left their work to their everlasting remembrance." 50 Unlike Orlers, Van Bleyswijck did not discuss the lives and works of living artists, but only mentioned the names, including, of course, that of Vermeer. However, he introduced this en- 

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3. Jacob Marum after Karel van Mander, Inscriptie of Karel van Mander, Het schilder-boek . . . (Haarlem, 1639, engraving)


ed the first account on a grand scale of the lives and works of Netherlandish painters. The title print of this book (fig. 1) attributes the role in the creation and execution of the original woodcut to Verts, a Netherlander seated at the left. Below de Vos, proclaiming his claim to fame, and on the other female figure in the act of securing eternal honor and glory, the chronicle of a

... in relation to the glorification of the city of Haarlem had begun some decades earlier. 26

... 1565 and 1570, in his Batavia ... (1657), in which many of the artists were enumerated. 28

... Cock published a series of portrait prints of famous Netherlandish painters, with laudatory epigraphs, at Domenicus Lampsonius. 29

... century spawned many eulogizing cities by extolling their present glory, their government, and famous sons. 30

... in the lives and works of living artists, but only mentioned their names, including, of course, that of Vermeer. However, he introduced this enumeration of living artists by stating that

... their works would always be cataloged in every country, and hence were not included in the list. That after they have passed away, when death has snatched their artful brushes from their hands, they will earn even more praise ... and, although Fane has already made their names illustrious, he wishes that, to be saved forever from the destructive scissors of Antropus, their names will be handed down to posterity in the books of memory of famous artists by some other eloquent pen according to their merits." 31-32

... Van Bleswyck tells us that, in addition to Karel van Mander's Lives, his sources were the recently published book by Cornelis de Bie, The Golden Gallery of the Noble and Lustrous Art of Painting, 33 and information from several people who were knowledgeable in the arts. It is, I think, entirely possible that Vermeer was one of them. Vermeer would certainly have known the publisher Arnold Bockh, who had his business on the market square, only a few steps from Van Bleswyck's studio. It was Bockh who wrote the laudatory poem on the death of Cornelis Fabritius that was included in Van Bleswyck's book and ended with the well-known analogy that from the fire of this phoenix Vermeer arose to succeed Fabritius. Because in different copies of the same edition of Van Bleswyck's book the last four lines of this poem were printed in two versions, Albert Blankert suggested that Vermeer himself persuaded Bockh to change these lines during the printing process, 34 the second version places greater emphasis on the fact that Vermeer not only succeeded Fabritius but emulated his art. Vermeer's Art of Painting originated between 1664 and 1668, in the same period that Van Bleswyck and Bockh were working on this massive tome that appeared in 1667. This does not necessarily imply that there was any direct link between the two works, only that thoughts about the fame and honor of the art of painting and its practitioners may have been very much on Vermeer's mind. 35

... Vermeer probably also knew The Golden Gallery by the Fleming Cornelis de Bie (explicitly mentioned by Van Bleswyck), published a few years earlier in Antwerp (1663). In addition to numerous painters from Antwerp and Brussels, De Bie also honored many painters from the cities of Holland. He treated very few Italian and French artists, which seems to accentuate that he believed the truly talented artists of his century were Netherlandish. Among the artists whom he selected from the provinces of Holland and Utrecht were many with whom work Vermeer would have been well acquainted. In fact, Vermeer may have known some of these artists personally. 36

... The same motifs recur in virtually all of De Bie's laudatory poems: the art of painting brings immortal fame; praise gords honor and glory; painting (unlike its practitioners and the things they represent) does not perish but preserves the renown of both the painter and the painting for future generations. Laurel wreaths that crown, trumpets that sound, and pens that describe abound in these panegyrics.

In addition to Karel van Mander's title print discussed above, in the seventeenth century several pictorial representations were produced in which the trumpet and the laurel wreath were associated with the art of painting. The present text is undoubtedly the painting attributed to Michael van Musscher, showing Picture probably with the idealized features of RachelRuysch, the famous flower still life painter (fig. 1). 38

... Picture, alias Rachel Ruysch, is about to crown, with a laurel wreath, a little genius, while Fame, with a palette in hand, flying above her, trumpets the honor and glory of Picture and simultaneously the art of Rachel Ruysch.

Ever since Van Gelder called the artist's attire in Vermeer's painting a "Burgundian" costume, it has, until recently, invariably been described as alluding to historical times. 39 This notion was rightly refuted by Hermann Ulrich Asemann. 40 Sufficient to say that several comparable depictions of artists wearing such slashed doublets are found in this period, some showing painters, as in a drawing of The Painter in His Studio by Leonard Bramer (fig. 2). The costume denotes a certain bravura: it is undoubtedly fanciful and does not place the painter outside his time, but beyond the ordinary, which is fitting for a figure serving as the representative of this honorable art.

... Also the beautiful map in Vermeer's painting, still showing the northern and southern Netherlands as a unified entity, has often been interpreted as referring to times past. It is
resenting the visible world with suchness than "his Netherlandish count not excluding the ancients, he adds. A century later, Samuel van Hoogstraten convinced that “the art of painting is a land, as in a new Greece, is at the its glory.” Therefore, he continued, our fatherland, like an invaluable pearl fishery, or amine of precious the art of painting can daily put rich jewels of cabinet painting.”

Vermeer’s painting clearly reveals a kind of art the artist achieves honor. It is the art that the painters itself the perfect illusion by which paint to render everything visible, “the semblance that seems real” that has captured and captured the eyes of the paraphrase Phillips Angel. Because the art of painting surpasses all according to the arguments in the Paesaggio debate, arguments revives as well as by Cornelis de Bie. Vermeer seems to indicate that pictorial arts (sculpture, drawing, try) are inadequate in their imitation—they produce will always a piece of craft stone or clay, a piece with lines, or a woven textile—whe ing can even imitate those works of the reverse is impossible to achieve painting can create the illusion of a convincing space filled with light, different kinds of materials, substan, textiles, and the human figure in beautiful and transient form, that is, woman. With these illusions the able to present to the beholder to be mortal or perishable as though it stand the passage of time. This art eternal glory, as heralded by the artist and painting is.

The notions discussed above seem in a painting that is itself image of a painter who is observed the verge of portraying a young wo serve as his model. She is the composition: the light, the lines (tive, the painter's gaze, all direct to the young woman—not an figure, but a girl carrying the artist, elicit the aforementioned association) this image of the art of painting 

true that this map of the seventeen provinces, which was first published in 1658 by Claes Jansz Visscher, did not correspond with the official political situation in Vermeer’s time. It is entirely fitting in this context, however, because it shows the Netherlands as it was still embodied in the minds of contemporaries. As noted by Albert Blankert, from Constantijn Huygens’ discussion of contemporary painters (written around 1629), to Arnold Houbraken’s three-volume biographical opus published between 1718 and 1728, no distinction was made between artists from the northern or the southern provinces, they were all Netherlandish artists, in the words of Houbraken, “Nederlandse konstchilders en schildersessen.”

That something extraordinary had happened to the art of painting in this country must have been clear to many contemporaries. Around 1639 Huygens proudly wrote that no one ever attained a higher level of rep-
Vermeer’s painting clearly reveals with what kind of art the artist achieves honor and fame. It is the art that the painting itself represents: the perfect illusion by which painting is able to render everything visible, “the power of semblance that seems real” that has to “conquer and capture” the eyes of the art lover, to paraphrase Philips Angel.48 Because of this, the art of painting surpasses all other arts, according to the arguments in the familiar paragone debate, arguments revived by Angel as well as by Cornelis de Bie.49 Vermeer seems to indicate that the other pictorial arts (sculpture, drawing, and tapestry)49 are inadequate in their imitation of nature—such products will always look like a piece of crafted stone or clay, a piece of paper with lines, or a woven textile—whereas painting can even imitate those works of art, while the reverse is impossible to achieve.48 Only painting can create the illusion of a perfectly convincing space filled with light, of all those different kinds of materials, substances, and textiles, and of the human figure in its most beautiful and transient form, that of a young woman. With these illusions the painter is able to present to the beholder that which is mortal or perishable as though it can withstand the passage of time.49 This affords his art eternal glory, as heralded by the laurel wreath the artist is painting.

The notions discussed above are represented in a painting that is centered on an image of a painter who is observing and on the verge of portraying a young woman who serves as his model.50 She is the focus of the composition: the light, the lines of perspective, the painter’s gaze, all direct the beholder to the young woman—not an allegorical figure, but a girl carrying the attributes that effect the aforementioned associations. For this image of the art of painting as aspiring
to and deserving eternal honor and glory—which probably served as an exemplary specimen of his own capacities as a painter—Vermeer drew deeply from the rich tradition of representing a painter who observes and depicts a beautiful female figure from life, a tradition that always had the purpose of underscoring the dignity of the art of painting. His composition would have reminded the connoisseur of the portrayals of Saint Luke Painting the Virgin and Apelles Painting Campaspe. In these scenes the artists also look at their model, recording her beauty in a painting. Since these themes show the two venerated "patrons" of the art of painting at work, they imply that the representation of consummate female beauty might be considered the highest task of the painter's art, and that in turn this beauty inspires him to achieve perfection in his art. The image of Saint Luke Painting the Virgin reveals that the painter could represent celestial beauty as though it were actually present, an object of devotion as well as of admiration for the power of the art of painting (fig. 6). And in profane terms, Apelles—the prince of painters, thought to have been the greatest painter of antiquity—proved that the depiction of perfect female pulchritude and grace is paradigmatic for everything that painting can achieve.

In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century laudatory poems, for instance in the book of Cornelis de Bie, contemporary painters were praised ad nauseam as being equal to or having surpassed Apelles. Apelles' name was synonymous for all that a painter could strive for. At the same time it would have evoked images of intangible female beauty and grace, that was what Apelles had been praised for in particular. All the well-known anecdotes about Apelles concern the depiction of female beauty, especially of Venus, the personification of beauty and seduction. Apelles was even said to have died while painting a Venus that surpassed everything else. In this Van Mander elaborated on Pliny by adding the topic that it was as if nature could no longer tolerate having to yield to the paintings of Apelles. However, Van Mander concluded, this was to no avail, because by giving life through his paints, Apelles' name became immortal.

The most famous story about Apelles is the one of his painting Alexander the Great's mistress Campaspe. Inspired by her beauty, Apelles painted her from life as Venus, creating a work that was long and highly esteemed from Alexander the Great to Emperor Augustus. This painting, and the fact that Campaspe was given to him by Alexander, earned Apelles his eternal fame. In Joos van Winghe's quite well-known depiction of Apelles Painting Campaspe (fig. 7), the painter's model—accompanied by Cupid who strikes his arrow into Apelles' heart—is not just Campaspe but also Venus herself, that is, beauty and grace personified. Van Winghe's features can be recognized in the painter's face, and a genius is about to crown him with a laurel wreath. The way in which Van Mander recounted the story of Apelles falling in love with Campaspe is quite remarkable. Van Mander elaborated on his source, adding that since Apelles knew more about beautiful women than Alexander, he was all the more prone to being ravished and conquered by love when looking steadily at his model while painting. Thus Van Mander emphasized that the painter should be considered a connoisseur of feminine pulchritude, and precisely for this reason—combined with the fact that he has to study his beautiful model carefully—he is particularly prey to the seductive powers of an attractive woman. Both notions seem to be stressed in Willem van Haecht's painting of a large Antwerp kunstkrager (with paintings from the collection of Cornelis van der Geest)—an allegory of the art of painting—in which Apelles is painting a quite decently dressed Campaspe (fig. 8), next to Campaspe stands a servant who holds a drawing of the Judgment of Paris. The activities of the painter egg what Paris is doing (and being seduced by) consummate beauty. However, in the painter's mind result is an image of beauty and grace that will forever delight and seduce the beholder.

That the depiction of female beauty stand for the painter's highest goal is evident from several allegories of Paris which Pictura is working on a nude. In a little painting by Johann Hammer for instance (fig. 9) Pit dressed in a turban and surrounded by other arts, captures Ven while a laurel wreath is held up to the head; through Pictura's depiction of beauty can be forever admired. Painters portrayed themselves as a sort of Apelles in the midst of painting completed a Venus-like figure range from the portrait of Frans which he is holding up a small painting of a nude (fig. 10), to Frans van Mieris the Elder's presentation of the creations of Van Mieris painters (fig. 11). The young father Willem van Mieris is set in the foreground, while Frans the Young portrait of his famous grandfather; the latter points proudly to the trait in Arnold Houbraken's book of Netherlandish painters. A Venus stands on the easel.

Frans van Mieris the Elder made a variation of the theme in a painting formerly in Dresden but sadly lost, War II (fig. 12). Here the painter depicting a young woman who is characterized as a contemporary Vence the presence of a rather conspicuous of a Cupid "flying" right head. The painter and his model are in animated conversation, while looks knowingly at the beholder. If love is undoubtedly aroused by her beauty, which stimulates him to take with such beauty and verisimilitude in turn will seduce the beholder.

All these painters are shown in of capturing or having completed the modeling of youthful female face, precisely where Vermeer chose to in the Art of Painting. It is also what a poem by Jacob Cats claims he is
The activities of Apelles, the painter, echo what Paris is doing: judging (and being seduced by) consummate female beauty. 36 However, in the painter's case the result is an image of beauty and grace that will forever delight and seduce the eyes of the beholder.

That the depiction of female beauty may stand for the painter's highest goals is also evident from several allegories of painting in which Pictura is working on a Venus-like nude. In a little painting by Johann Rottenhammer for instance (fig. 9), Pictura, surrounded by other arts, captures Venus in paint while a laurel wreath is held above her head: through Pictura's depiction unperishable beauty can be forever admired. 37 Several painters portrayed themselves as a contemporary Apelles in the midst of painting or having completed a Venus-like figure. Examples range from the portrait of Frans Floris in which he is holding up a small panel representing a nude (fig. 10), to Frans van Mieris the Younger's presentation of the three generations of Van Mieris painters (fig. 11). 38 The old father Willem van Mieris is seated in the foreground, while Frans the Younger holds a portrait of his famous grandfather and simultaneously paints proudly to the latter's portrait in Arnold Houbrakens's book of biographies of Netherlandish painters. A painting of Venus stands on the easel.

Frans van Mieris the Elder made a playful variation of the theme in a painting c. 1657, formerly in Dresden but sadly lost in World War II (fig. 12). 39 Here the painter is shown painting a young woman who seems to be characterized as a contemporary Venus owing to the presence of a rather conspicuous plaster cast of a Cupid "flying" right above her head. The painter and his model are engaged in animated conversation, while the maid looks knowingly at the beholder. The painter's love is undoubtedly aroused by his model's beauty, which stimulates him to depict her with such beauty and verisimilitude that her image in turn will seduce the eye of the beholder. 40 All these painters are shown in the process of capturing or having completed the immortalization of youthful female beauty. This is precisely what Vermeer chose to represent in The Art of Painting. It is also what a painter in a poem by Jacob Cats claims he is able to do.
when called upon to demonstrate the superiority and dignity of his art (which is part of an argument to convince his beloved that she should marry him rather than other suitors, among them a poet). The painter promises her that:

This pleasant image of your youthful days
I will pass on by way of my art,
To the age which follows ours.
So that your beautiful radiance, even after a thousand years,
Will still be known in our kingdom;
And that your fresh youth will still
Be contemplated and adored by all neighboring towns.
So that you will live forever through my art,
Although your time of life has long been gone.\(^{16}\)

Thus the painter emphasized that her youthful beauty will forever be “admired” by anyone who looks at the painting. This is the kind of art that Vermeer brought to its highest perfection in most of his paintings; a breathtaking illusion of female beauty that elicits the love of the beholder for her image. One is also reminded of lines of verse by the poet and painter Adriaen van de Venne:

Who is able to speak and sing about the merit and fame
Of such a sweet and, full of benefit and delight,
That creates out of nothing a beloved sweetheart...
The eye desires, man yearns
And I long all the more for this reason:
Because I see an image that has neither body nor speech.
Movement nor feeling, and is but semblance.

8. Willem van Haecht,
Collectors Cabinet with
Apollo Painting Canopus
[detail], c. 1650, oil on panel.
Royal Collections of Painting
Haarlem, The Hague.

9. Johann Böttgerhammer,
Allegory of the Arts,
c. 1560–1580, oil on copper.
Staatliche Museum zu Berlin,
Gemäldegalerie.

10. Johann Wenzel,
Portrait of Franz Farin,
1572, engraving.
From: Lanzmann, Pictores
Albani... 1753 (Munich, 1758, col. pl. 56, fig. 2). Munich:
Ridderprang, Amsterdam.

11. Frans van Mieris the Younger,
The Three Commissions [sic] Mieris,
1742, oil on panel.
Stadelsches Museum Di Lakenhaai,
Leiden.
As if it were to turn its face against mine . . .
The eye is never satisfied, desire is never satisfied,
As long as one remains involved with art and fame.17
Possibly stimulated by Van Mieris' painting, Vermeer set out to create an image that linked the pictorial representation of female beauty with the everlasting fame and honor of the art of painting. Perhaps he had also seen Samuel van Hoogstraaten's spectacular perspective box, now in London: if so, he may have been inspired by the now rather damaged panels on the outside (the two shorter sides) showing a painter working for the love of art, Amoris Causa, and an artist painting for the sake of fame and glory, Gloriae Causa (fig. 11).18 The first portrays a female figure that seems to be a conflation of the personification of Nature (with her many breasts) and the muse Urania (crowned with stars),19 the other, toting at his easel, receives a golden chain and a laurel wreath. As Van Hoogstraaten before him, Vermeer also drew upon the rich tradition of painters at their easels seen from the side. Instead of the conventional turn (fig. 8), they both emphatically focused on the identity of the painter: with a brush, he is the painter. At the same time, it seems to be peering over the shoulder of another artist who presents all this to us, in a mirror.20

Like a contemporary Apelles (a master of his craft), this painter observes an attractive young woman from life, capturing her beauty, creating a perfect image that will always proclaim the glory of the art of his country in general and his individual style in particular. The female beauty will be forever "contemplated and adored," to quote the poet. How successful Vermeer was in this kind of painting is evidenced by the number of people who continue to admire it today.
As if it were to turn its face against mine, . . .

The eye is never satisfied, desire is never satiated.

As long as one remains involved with art and love, . . .

Possibly stimulated by Van Mieris' painting, Vermeer set out to create an image that linked the pictorial representation of female beauty with the everlasting fame and honor of the art of painting. Perhaps he had also seen Samuel van Hoogstraten's spectacular perspective box, now in London; if so, he may have been inspired by the now rather damaged panels on the outside (the two shorter sides) showing a painter working for the love of art, *Amoris Causa*, and an artist painting for the sake of fame and glory, *Gloriae Causa* (fig. 13). The first portrays a female figure that seems to be a conflation of the personification of Nature (with her many breasts) and the muse Urania (crowned with stars); the other, toiling at his easel, receives a golden chain and a laurel wreath. As Van Hoogstraten before him, Vermeer also drew upon the rich tradition of painters at their easels seen from behind. Instead of the conventional turn of the head [fig. 8], they both emphatically depersonalized the artist by not showing his face. The identity of the painter is withheld from us; he is the painter. At the same time, however, we seem to be peering over the shoulder of the artist who presents all this to us, that is, Vermeer himself.

Like a contemporary Apelles (and like Vermeer), this painter observes and paints a young woman from life, capturing her transient beauty, creating a perfect illusion that will always proclaim the glory of his art and of the art of his country in general: the enticingly beautiful image will be forever there to be "contemplated and adored," to quote Cats. Just how successful Vermeer was in creating this kind of painting is evidenced by the vast number of people who continue to adore his works in our time.
Appelte eines Herrschers [Frankfurt am Main, 1903], pp. 22-24). Who would have refused it if everyone had known such a painting? A quarrel with the guild at the time of the picture's completion does not seem very probable either, since Vermeer was head of the guild in 1662-1665 and 1704-1707 (before and after the creation of the Art of Painting).

9. Balthasar de Monconys, Journal des voyages du Musée du Marchand de Monconys, 3 vols. (Lyon, 1660-1664), 2:174: "Vermeer qui n'avait point de seigneur ou seigneurin." The fact that we know two sources in which a visit by an important connoisseur to Vermeer's studio is mentioned suggests that such visits must have occurred quite often.

10. On this document, see René Brous. "On célèbre Peintre nommé Vermeijgh," in Johannes Vermeer [cat. exh., National Gallery of Art and Royal Cabinet of Paintings Mauritshuis] (Washington and The Hague, 1976-1977), 43-45. Brous suggested that the Art of Painting was one of the paintings Vermeer had seen. He also noticed the sleeves of the sun that the man is holding, the sword sheath, and the two children in the picture, which he saw as an indication of the picture's historical significance.

11. Abraham Willemsz, Künstler Inventar [The Hague, 1615-1622], 10, 12-13. The painting was described as "one of the most beautiful and most realistic" by Willemsz, and was located in the "Scheldebosch" (painter's) studio. The precise meaning of the term "vastehout" is not entirely clear. Willemsz translated it, erroneously I think, as "Auchthuide." However, it should not be mistaken for a shop signboard, which was then, as now, called an "unthuide." The verb "vastehout" was used in the seventeenth century especially for the display of merchandise by the shopkeeper or trader in his shop window or on the street, and could also be used for displaying or exhibiting works of art (Woorenboek der Nederlandsche-tafel 1882:240). I am certainly not suggesting that Vermeer's painting was meant as a kind of signboard to put outside, but only that, in a way, the function might have been comparable to Van Musscher's painting—a showcase for the display of his art to lovers and prospective clients. Van Musscher's work might have been the same as the one that was sold in the sale of his paintings in 1706. "A painter in his studio, very beautiful" (Geurt Hoet and Pieter Treur, Catalogue of Naamlozen van schilders, met derzelven prijzen, 5 vols. [The Hague, 1715-1720], 2:496, no. 11)."}

main purpose must have been to emphasize the laurel wreath. Therefore, I also think that it makes no sense to assume that he consciously depicted a version of painting that does not seem very probable either, since Vermeer was head of the guild in 1662-1665 and 1704-1707 (before and after the creation of the Art of Painting).

14. Cesar Rips, Iconologia et symbolism of the vestments, trans. Dr. Peter Pinker (Amsterdam, 1654), 158: "Ceres Room. This Mace to Clovis visswo kriek genomen, der welcke bedeert preizan, van Clovis 't welcke eene bedeert, van veicre van de impen, was van zy self." It is remarkable that from Rips's account of Clovis, only the description of her arrows (the laurel wreath, trumpet, and book of Thucydides) has always been cited.

15. Karl von Mander, Weltegulich on de Meta- morphosen, in his Het schilder-buch (Haarlem, 1604-1605), fol. 340: "Clos, 1650, Griss viss Mose melden brecht, seelk, seltzere gebroche welck echten priscus, ont looer gepoet to worden fase ein feinkme was, ghe- schiedenisse te beschreiben." 16. See, for instance, Der Niederländische Heller [Allarnsd, 1601], 50: "The art of painting" (the roles of the nine muses called "Choir, versemaking of the Muse", the first muse, Clovis, is exclusively presented as the "free" muse that inspires learning and the practice of arts.

17. Francesco Bianchi, Die Scheldebos show of schilders (Rotterdam, 1969), 66-69 (the pages of the title print and of the explanatory poems are not numbered).


20. Wheelock 1951, 121. That this symbol seems rather removed from Vermeer's works was solved by stating that "the essence of Vermeer's art had always been to reach such the superficial level of reality to probe those essential truths of human existence." Compare also Leon D. Steindorff, Vermeer and His Contemporaries (New York, 1951), 78, who suggested "that, as the subject of the painting indicates, Vermeer saw himself as a history painter in the purest sense of the word." 21. For the "nostalgia" interpretation (Vermeer looking back to better times for painters under the Habsburg reform), see in the first place Charles de Botor, L'Atelier de Vermeer, Gazette des Beaux-Arts 44 (1921), 206-273 and also below, note 4 and 41. For other references to the history of the country, see Hubenschmitt 1987, 105-110 and Assmen 1986, 33-36.


37. ‘Dieck van Blevenswijk, Beschrijvinge der stadt Delft (1667), 642: “Laat ons nu al gien zien wat vermaerde Schilders, Boed-bouwers en andere uyt-
staende, en gijelck als de navolgende-kon- stenaren, ons stadt rook voert gebracht en uitge-
vende” van deel, die verontruste van hun Konstnaren-vandae-wereldsche secken van hare handen heir en daer in de wereld ten eeu ende der geleed-
nisse have nagelaten.”

38. Van Blevenswijk, 1667, 642: “Her na her overleden, of de Dui deu konsten principen uyt hare handen sal hebben gewencke, noch meerderen lof zullen vinden, of de Jaen de alden genoemden behoeft geen, en gijelck de Faam bee name alheen jeytse naemenhjouh boeft gemathe, de selfde cock nache vandae, don er da e ders ander wel-sprekeinge pen, in der gedachten boeken der vermaerde Kon-
stnaren, d’ouzenhjouhlyks vouwen overlegheven werden, om der verderde Schelmer der Stad Delft eeu wyf boeven(bijt) na zij.”

39. Cornelis de Bie, Het gulden cabinet van de adel (1667) (Antwerp, 1662).


tied that from this supposed changing of the lines of Born’s poem, as well as from the Art of Painting, it appears that Vermeer was not modest about his art.

42. Vermeer certainly knew Leonardo’s methods per-
sonally. Other Dutch artists praised by De Beie were Michiel van Montfleury and Palamedes Palamedes (both dead at that time). There are a remarkable number of portraits from the De Beie collection in the seventeenth-

43. For this series, called Pantheon antiquorum pictorium germaniae interitus elegiis, see Rupprecht 184, 18-23.


45. This is especially true of Jan Prosier, Beschrei-
bung der stad Leiden (Leiden, 1684-1694), and to a lesser extent of Theodoor Schorre-
bus, Het Haarlem (Haarlem, 1648).


47. Van Bruegel, 1689, 165-166: “In gelijkwijze
den eeuw is en de selving niet lich deuwen in de week van de eeuw eeuw beheven wile ende eeuw eeuw behoren den Constenaren: insoeverhen in het voortbrengen van eeuw vermaerde ende treffelijke Schilders, wien- wachtscheid ende vandae, toegewezen hare- ban eeuw onderon eeuwende Schilderseelenden, toe- horen by hetten der Stede bewezen, bewezen Van den Heeren (vermaerde) die van hare handen hebben ende wachtscheid zyne, omte in al leid die eeuw boeken ophogen eeuwende geheesoomen te worden.”
65--66. The painting has also been attributed to Constantijn Nepelsch (as in Leibfried 1968, fig. 12).

65. The list to note that the costume was not from Vermeer's own time was Charles de Tolnay 1953, 215. 216. 217.

65. Almost so, arc so, e and even. Vermeer painted a number of men wearing slashed doublets and to the fact that this item of clothing had been made in England. More relevant are his comparisons with the young officer in a painting by Caspar Netscher of 1660-1665 National Portrait Gallery, London (see the Art in the Gallery of Vertugadi by Adrian van Ostade of 1659 (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum), and with the drawing in a Private Portrait in the Studio by Leonard Bramer fig. 11). Michael Levey noted some time ago that the costume should be seen as historical (but without good argument) Michael Levey, The Painter Depicted Paintings as a Subject in Painting (London, 1961), 57. Also see Wheelock 1965, 133 and the next note.

66. See for other paintings wearing a slashed doublet: Adrian van Ostade (above, note 44) and a painting by Abraham van den Tempel (Painter SAMING as a Subject in Painting, a self-portrait, whereabouts unknown. photo Rijksmuseum for Kunsthistorische Documentatie, The Hague). My colleague and a specialist in costumes, Irene Groenewegh, brought some examples of this type of slashed doublets to my attention. She also pointed out that, given certain technical aspects of Vermeer's doublet, he must have painted it in, and that only the doublets of 1660 by Caspar Netscher's painting (above, note 46) and of two officers in two Civic Guard paintings of 1662 show the very thin, extremely numerous strips of the type seen in Vermeer's artist's Birchboullus van der Heide, The Celebration of the Peace of 6 April 1667, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam: the eighth man from the left in a yellow costume; Gower Flinck, The Civic Guard of Amsterdam Celebrating the Treaty of Maastricht, 1663, Amsterdam (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam: the sixth man from the right. Two are quite different from the man on the left, with a corset almost entirely visible, and the weaker strips almost entirely visible). As for the Venetian figure (above, note 13) for the supposed "dressed" technique of the painting on which the artist is working.


66. In my view the double-headed eagle in Vermeer's painting is too inconspicuous to have been intended as an allegory, with particular significance. The type of chandelier appears in a well-known painting by Gerard ter Borch, c. 1663 (Fine Arts, Buckingham Palace, London) and also in the Lovelace Portrait of 1663 (National Portrait Gallery, London) and in views of the south side of the Old Church in Delft by Cornelis de Man (Museum van de Ridderkamer, Leiden, and Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio), see also Walter A. Liddle, Architectural Painting in Delft (Doornfontein, 1956), 182. 183. 184. For a more detailed discussion see Sluijter 1991, 259--78. A copy of the map of 1656 is in the Louvre (Museum of the Bibliothèque Nationale). The map of this city is James A. Weil, "The Map of Venice in Vermeer's "Art of Painting," Imagery 50 (1998), 7--30.

65. Blankert 1987, 124. For a similar discussion see also A. E. J. Zadkine, "De vogel van Constantijn Huygens door hemzelf."
Angelo 1642, 27: "ehem eygenholtz krecht..."

Angel 1642, 37: "Hans Ulzburg egholtz..."

Angel 1642, 39: "Hans Ulzburg egholtz..."

Armel 1642, 25: "Hans Ulzburg egholtz..."

Armel 1642, 26: "Hans Ulzburg egholtz..."

Armel 1642, 27: "Hans Ulzburg egholtz..."

Armel 1642, 30: "Hans Ulzburg egholtz..."

Armel 1642, 31: "Hans Ulzburg egholtz..."

Armel 1642, 32: "Hans Ulzburg egholtz..."

Armel 1642, 33: "Hans Ulzburg egholtz..."

Armel 1642, 34: "Hans Ulzburg egholtz..."

Armel 1642, 35: "Hans Ulzburg egholtz..."

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Armel 1642, 38: "Hans Ulzburg egholtz..."

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Armel 1642, 40: "Hans Ulzburg egholtz..."

Armel 1642, 41: "Hans Ulzburg egholtz..."

Armel 1642, 42: "Hans Ulzburg egholtz..."

Armel 1642, 43: "Hans Ulzburg egholtz..."
out the fundamental difference in composition and lighting. In Blanckert 1974, 71, a connection between the two was suggested, but at that time the author was not sure which of the two paintings was the original. However, Otto Naumann dated the painting c. 1655-1657 Franz van Mieris the Elder, 3 vols. [Donkmeijer, 1961, 14 and 15] and in the first he states that the painting c. 1657 or early 1658 is the most plausible date. See also Hubrecht 1985, 110-116.

4. On the top of the panels of the picture is the title by his model and the effect this has on the visibilité of the painting, see Sluiter 1939, 260-270. On contemporary thoughts about the visual use of light and the impact. A drawing in which Van Hogen- straten depicted the same benefits of the art of painting, a picture of it, the picture behind it, surrounded by a figure, a sound of a trumpet, two embossing Capsids, and the figure of Nature, offering riches (Bruijs 1955, fig. 13). This corresponds with Van Hogenstraten's primary requirement for the picture: "That he be not only able to adore art, but that he is in love with representing the pleasures of beautiful nature" (Van Hogenstraten 1678, 110-112).

5. For numerous examples, among them his depictions of Saint Luke, Apelles, and Zenodotus, see Ader and Modell [ed.]: Staatliche Kunstschatze [Kunst-Baden-Baden, 1969]. Leeuw 1969, La peinture de la fenêtre [ed.]: Musée des Beaux-Arts [Dijon, 1981]. Raup 1985 Amsinck und Schwellnack 1994. See also our figs. 6 and 9. The following are some printed book illustrations with this type of painting that might have been well known in this period (not to be found in the literature). Amman, Der Hausmeister, in Jos Amman and Hans Sachs, Künstlerische Werke des 17. Jahrhunderts [Amsterdam, 1668]. Also in Jos van Oostrae, Censoria annu. sculptor, emblem in Otto Von Van, Emblemata Hibernia (Antwerp, 1665), and the work of Hans van Meurs, in Jan van Vliet, Emblemata Latina, in Jacob Reijenberg, Emblemata Politica [Amsterdam, 1651], the painter in the background who is painting a female nude.

6. In a much earlier painting, A Painter Painting a Still Life (1630 or 1639), by Jacob van Vrevenius, this is also the case. See the picture that is close to that of Vrevenius; his painter also looks to the left (toward a still life on a table) and only one hand is visible, which is ideally placed on a muslin and touching the canvas, while nothing of his face is shown. It is reproduced in Oud Holland 63 (1947), 27, fig. 25. Compare also Theodore Galile (Raup 1984, fig. 178). Jon van Crambresch (Raup 1984, fig. 172) and the picture in Van Hogenstraten's title print of chapter 3 of his Life-Vestig (Van Hogenstraten 1683), with Polyphemus. In the last case a painter is making a portrait of a lady sitting for him; but the portrayal on his canvas shows the lady accompanied by a Chapman, which turns her representation into a picture of Venus.


8. The model of the painter working for Anthonie van der Hoef has been identified as the muse Urania (London 1948, 205). Bruijs 1955, 213, the one who leads the artist "to climb the staircase to the stars." As Van Hogenstraten notes in book 6 of his lettering, dedicated to this muse. However, the fact that she has several breasts means that she also represents Nature personified, for instance, the frontispiece of Karel van Mander, 1897 fig. 3. A drawing in which Van Hogenstraten depicted the same benefits of the art of painting, a picture of it, the picture behind it, surrounded by a figure, a sound of a trumpet, two embossing Capsids, and the figure of Nature, offering riches (Bruijs 1955, fig. 13). This corresponds with Van Hogenstraten's primary requirement for the picture: "That he be not only able to adore art, but that he is in love with representing the pleasures of beautiful nature" (Van Hogenstraten 1678, 110-112).

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10. In a much earlier painting, A Painter Painting a Still Life (1630 or 1639), by Jacob van Vrevenius, this is also the case. See the picture that is close to that of Vrevenius; his painter also looks to the left (toward a still life on a table) and only one hand is visible, which is ideally placed on a muslin and touching the canvas, while nothing of his face is shown. It is reproduced in Oud Holland 63 (1947), 27, fig. 25. Compare also Theodore Galile (Raup 1984, fig. 178). Jon van Crambresch (Raup 1984, fig. 172) and the picture in Van Hogenstraten's title print of chapter 3 of his Life-Vestig (Van Hogenstraten 1683), with Polyphemus. In the last case a painter is making a portrait of a lady sitting for him; but the portrayal on his canvas shows the lady accompanied by a Chapman, which turns her representation into a picture of Venus.


13. On Venus and Pictura and also the collaboration of the two, see Sluiter 1939, 382-372. 'This article discusses a few examples in relation to Colenius's brilliant Vissian invention, in which the artist paints Venus (the paragon of beauty, as well as the prime subject of the erotic), who represents in the same time the personification of Light (the sense that most strongly erodes death).


15. See Van Gelder 1998, 10, referred to in this painting in relation to Vemeer's Art of Painting (comparing the space), as did Blanckert 1974, 128, who pointed...