

TECHNICAL ART HISTORY COLLOQUIUM:

The Girl in the Spotlight



The Technical Art History Colloquium is organised by Sven Dupré (Utrecht University and University of Amsterdam, PI ERC ARTECHNE), Arjan de Koomen (University of Amsterdam, Coordinator MA Technical Art History), Abbie Vandivere (University of Amsterdam, Coordinator MA Technical Art History & Mauritshuis, The Hague, Paintings Conservator), Erma Hermens (University of Amsterdam and Rijksmuseum) and Ann-Sophie Lehmann (University of Groningen). Monthly meetings take place on Thursdays. This edition of the Technical Art History Colloquium is organised by Abbie Vandivere, and will focus on the technical examination of Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (ca. 1665).

Date and time: Thursday 8 March 2018, 14:00 – 15:45

Location: Nassauzaal, Mauritshuis

Plein 29, Den Haag

Admission to the colloquium is free.

Please bring your *Museumkaart* or purchase a ticket to enter the museum.

Introduction

Between 26 February and 11 March, the *Golden Room* of the Mauritshuis will be transformed into a technical examination laboratory to examine the museum's most beloved painting in front of the public: the *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (ca. 1665) by Johannes Vermeer. An international team of scientists and researchers will examine the painting using the latest non-invasive technology. Some of our research questions are:

- What steps did Vermeer take to create the painting?
- What can we find out about layers beneath the surface?
- How does the painting look at a microscopic level?
- Which materials did Vermeer use and where did they come from?
- Which techniques did Vermeer use to create subtle optical effects?
- What did the painting look like originally, and how has it changed?

You can follow Abbie's blog and find out more about the technical examination project *Girl in the Spotlight* at: www.mauritshuis.nl/girlwithablog. *The Girl in the Spotlight* is a Mauritshuis initiative, and is being conducted as a collaborative project within the framework of the Netherlands Institute for Conservation, Art and Science (NICAS).

Program

Please make sure you have a ticket (or *Museumkaart*) to enter the museum. Feel free to visit the research laboratory in the *Golden Room* before or after the lectures. In our exhibition space, we present *Jan Steen's Histories*.

14.00 – 14:25: *Girl with a Pearl Earring* in context

Lea van der Vinde, Curator, Mauritshuis

Johannes Vermeer painted several *tronies* around 1665, of which the *Girl with a Pearl Earring* is undoubtedly the best known. The girl's idealized face and her unusual turban-like headdress lend the picture a timeless, even mysterious character. The picture invites speculation, and this contributed to its unprecedented popularity.

Lea van der Vinde will discuss Vermeer's choice of subject, how the painting relates to his other works, and possible sources of inspiration. She will also present the intriguing history of the painting's discovery in the late 19th century, how it found its way to the Mauritshuis and how it became the international icon it is today.

14.30 – 15.15: *The Girl in the Spotlight: A technical (re-)examination of the Girl with a Pearl Earring*

Abbie Vandivere, Paintings Conservator, Mauritshuis

The *Girl with a Pearl Earring* was last thoroughly examined in 1994, during a conservation treatment that was also carried out in front of the public. Major advances in non-invasive

technical analysis have been made over the past 24 years, and this enables us to find out more about the materials and techniques that Vermeer used to paint the *Girl*.

Abbie Vandivere, Head Researcher for the *Girl in the Spotlight*, will present some results from the re-examination of samples that were taken in the 1990s. Then she will describe the process and results of the current technical examination, which includes: sx-radiography, Macro X-ray Fluorescence (MA-XRF) scanning, Scanning Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT), near-infrared imaging, topography/gloss/colour scanning, digital microscopy, and Macro X-ray Powder Diffraction (MA-XRPD).

15:15 – 15:30: Questions

15:30 – : Visit the research laboratory set up in the *Golden Room* of the Mauritshuis

On 8 March, Macro X-ray Powder Diffraction (MA-XRPD) is being carried out by scientists from the AXES research group from the University of Antwerp.

Please make sure you have a ticket (or *Museumkaart*) to enter the museum. As space in the room is limited, we may have to visit in shifts.

In order to ensure that you will be accommodated, RSVP to j.briggeman@uu.nl by 22 February 2018.

Next TAH colloquium:

12 April, Utrecht



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The Technical Art History Colloquia are a cooperation of the ARTECHNE Project (Utrecht University and University of Amsterdam), the Netherlands Institute for Conservation, Art and Science (NICAS) the University of Amsterdam and the Mauritshuis. The ARTECHNE project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 648718).