

Symbols of Change in Dutch Golden Age Still Life Paintings: Teachers' Guide and Lesson Plan

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Still life paintings from the Golden Age are visually exquisite renderings that may appear today as a random assortment of interesting flowers, food and/or objects. It is possible, in fact enjoyable, to simply look at these paintings and appreciate the skill of the artists' nearly photographic renderings, the rich lush colors and balanced compositions. However, it can be more interesting to examine these paintings in light of the period in which they were painted and view them as a reflection of the time and society in which they were painted.

The mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries, years commonly known as the Golden Age of the Dutch Republic are rich with invention, discovery and social, religious, economic and political change. The artists of this era both reflected the world around them and participated in these monumental changes.

“Life in Dutch society was very different [than other parts of seventeenth-century Europe], for the Republic was the entrepot of world trade, with evidence of ships and the sea everywhere ... [I]t was a society in which no one could live without continually sensing the interaction of land and sea, town and country, one town with the next, soldiers and seamen with burghers, the exotic with the mundane, and the foreign with the local. Art, by encompassing all of this, and reflecting it on everyone's walls, and in every tavern and public building, made explicit, and heightened awareness of, what everyone saw and felt.¹

Learning Objectives for the Lesson Plan

Ideally, students who participate in this lesson will not only gain a greater understanding of the Golden Age of the Dutch Republic but also consider the impact of global trade,

scientific discovery, rising market economies, and the Protestant Reformation. Although these still life paintings focus on the Dutch, in a larger sense, they represent the history of early modern Europe and the creation of the modern market economy.

“... [T]he tremendous flowering of the arts which began in 1590s – at the same time as the commencement of Dutch dominance in the ‘rich trades’ – a Golden Age in which artistic achievement and innovation in art proceeded on a scale, and with an intensity, which has no parallel in any other time, or place, in history. This is true not only in that a new ideological and religious framework was created but also in that an unprecedented profusion, and variety, of artists and artistic skills ... Protestants, or at least forced to adapt to a Protestant cultural milieu.”²

This lesson seeks to make a connection between these painting and the society and politics of the times. A list of symbols and their possible interpretations is provided in Appendix A. It should be noted art historians continue to debate the correct interpretation of these paintings. This debate even includes art historians who believe that any modern interpretation of these paintings is inaccurate. It is therefore, essential to remember that one interpretation should not be assumed to be more accurate than any other. Nonetheless, a close examination of these works introduces the concept of allegory to students of history and art history and can offer interesting insights into this period of rapid social, religious, and economic change.

Background – The Reformation and Religious Imagery

Prior to the Reformation’s influence on the Netherlands, and in areas still dominated by the Catholic Church and wealthy monarchs, artists traditionally relied upon the Church and nobility for patronage and support. Although genre and still life painting existed before the Reformation, most artists relied on commissions to paint illustrations of the life of Jesus, Mary, saints and disciples.

The Reformation, especially the strident Calvinist branch that took hold and became the Dutch Reformed Church, specifically rejected the Catholic tradition of decorating churches with images of saints and biblical scenes. In some parts of the Netherlands, in 1566 angry mobs destroyed Church icons and interiors. These icons were seen as idolatrous.

“... the image-breaking began after the Protestants had seized several churches in the city ... great heaps of art treasures and vestments ... were put to the torch, local Protestant nobles took the lead. ... The counts of Culembourg and Batenburg ordered the stripping of altars and images from the churches in mid-September. Both in the towns of Brill and the surrounding countryside, the churches were systematically stripped...”³

Catholic churches and Church property were confiscated by the State. Statues and paintings were removed and church interiors were painted white and decorated simply in keeping with the Calvinist emphasis on the “word” of God rather than imagery.

The public rejection of the Catholic Church combined with a shrinking nobility could leave one to assume that the production of art would decline in the Netherlands, but other factors combined to create a thriving climate for artists and art patronage. The declining population of nobles associated with the overthrown Spanish Monarch and the Catholic Church, as well as the rise of a strong and wealthy merchant class combined to create a new class of art patrons.⁴

Catholic Church iconography was replaced by allegory and themes of moderation and control. Allusions to religious strictures without actual representation replaced images of saints, Christ, Mary and the Apostles.

“Indifference and constancy arose from the exercise of the reason; the individual must learn to judge things according to their true worth. Self-knowledge, insight into the deceptive essence of the world, and the abandonment of transitory things ... To be in the world, but not of the world to learn the meaning of "Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas" -was thus the common personal and didactic exhortation [...] ... the importance of knowing oneself, of leading a moderate life.⁵

Still life paintings both remind the viewer of the wonders of God’s world but also created an awareness of the transitory nature of life. The flowers, fruits or objects can create symbolic associations for the viewer and remind him that earthly distractions should not divert his goal of salvation. The artist readily satisfied the needs of this new buying public, and his or her works appealed to the broadest category of consumers, regardless of faith. Jan Davidsz de Heem, for example, a Catholic, succeeded artistically in appealing to a wide audience. However, viewers looking to find examples of the Catholic Eucharist can find or interpret them in De Heem’s paintings.⁶

Paintings and Painters

A great number of Dutch artists were part of the traditional guild systems. The Guild of Saint Luke followed the example of other guilds in the system of apprenticeships and training, limits on the numbers of artists/sellers, protection of local commissions as well as other forms of protection of their markets. Artists frequently acted as dealers in artworks as well as actual painters. As artists were active participants in the traditional trading networks, they were aware of their market and created works that would appeal to consumers, in fact many became specialists in certain types of paintings such as flowers, breakfasts, sweets, or elaborate banquet paintings.⁷

Economic Expansion and Art Patronage

· “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity” from Ecclesiastes.

One of the remarkable aspects of Dutch society at the time was the trend towards more republican, representative government while much of Europe looked to absolute monarchs with Louis XIV as a model. The Dutch model allowed for the rise of a merchant class. As these members of Dutch society gained greater wealth and power, the classic elements that distinguished nobility from commoners became less apparent.

“The onset of Dutch world trade primacy, and the rapid urban expansion which accompanied it, created a situation, with a new merchant elite, and a newly enriched regent class, in which, suddenly, very many artists could have prosperous careers ... demand for high-quality pictures was almost insatiable.”⁸

Access to and ownership of “original” paintings was not limited to nobility or social elites. During their Golden Age, the Dutch enjoyed the highest wages and standard of living in Europe.

“The French schoolmaster Jean Nicholas de Parival, who lived in Leiden for 20 years wrote in the 1660s: "I do not believe that so many good painters can be found anywhere else; also the houses are filled with very beautiful paintings and no one is so poor as not to wish to be well provided with them." His impressions have been substantiated by painstaking research into probate inventories. Even in rural Zeeland, farmers in the eighteenth century owned on average between five and ten paintings.”⁹

One can conclude that people not only had the economic means to purchase works of art, they also were not prevented from spending money in this way. In fact, the “consumption” of artwork is part of the regular Dutch economy treated similarly to production of other tradesmen.

“This desire to acquire objects determined largely the character and development of the nation’s cultural existence during the seventeenth century, and over a period of several generations provoked a considerable demand for consumer goods. But the structure and morality of Dutch society limited the choice of these principally to things which could add to the comfort of the house or enhance its appearance.”¹⁰

Science and Exploration

In addition to the impact of the Reformation, Dutch painters were both influenced by and occupied with the dissemination of scientific information evolving from both advances in scientific inquiry and access (through trade networks) to newly discovered flora and fauna.

“The fundamental qualities of the Dutch intellect expressed themselves in a liking for the concrete, a preoccupation with experimentation and practical applications and realism. All the evidence of the period bears

witness to the Dutch middle class's touching attachment to science, combined with an avid and sometimes naïve curiosity..."
 ... "All sorts of amateurs built of collections of minerals, shells, plant-life, reptiles, winged creatures and embryos."¹¹

Van Leeuwenhoek's invention of the microscope would have influenced the way in which artists viewed the world. One of the remarkable aspects of the Dutch still life is the reproduction of spectacular and minute details including miniature self-portraits in reflections, refracting dewdrops and bubbles, and precise renderings of insects.

"The constitution of the society in which [Leeuwenhoek] lived enabled him to carry on his researches freely and to present them to the scientific world. He would, however, never have reached such height of research and fame, if good luck had not brought him into contact with the young Royal Society, that was active in establishing contacts with scientists all over Europe and was eagerly collecting knowledge of nature. It published his discoveries and drew the attention of the world to his work."¹²

Dutch scholars, naturalists and others saw science integrated into the political and commercial conversations of the day. Scientific advancement brought real economic benefit to the Dutch thanks to the trade in these new and exotic items. Commercial contacts actively encouraged the exchange of knowledge. Artists and scientists regularly traveled with Dutch VOC traders and were an integral part of the dissemination of scientific information regarding the New World and Asia.¹³ One of the oldest botanical gardens in the world was established in 1590 at the University at Leiden, introducing many new plants (including tobacco and the tulip) to the western world.¹⁴

"[T]he powerful urban middle class of Holland, with its interest in the material reality around trade and profits, did not find 'practical' and manual preoccupation with the things of Nature beneath its dignity. 'This complete acceptance of the sensorily perceptible (which, by the way, is so clearly manifest also in seventeenth-century Dutch painting) created a mental climate in which new ideas and new scientific principles were able to get a firm footing straight away.'¹⁵

Endnotes:

¹Jonathon Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness and Fall, 1477-1806* (New York: Oxford University Press 1998). p. 563.

²Israel, p. 548.

³Israel, p. 149.

⁴Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: an Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (New York: Vintage, 1997), pp. 1-11

⁵Pamela Smith, *Science and Taste: Painting, Passions, and the New Philosophy in Seventeenth-Century Leiden* (Isis: Sep., 1999): 438

- ⁶ Arthur K. Wheelock, *From Botany to Bouquets: Flowers in Northern Art* (Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, 1999).
- ⁷ Mariet Westermann, *A Wordly Art: The Dutch Republic 1585-1718* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press 1996), pp. 25-40.
- ⁸ Israel, p. 350.
- ⁹ Maarten Prak, "Guilds and the Development of the Art Market during the Dutch Golden Age," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, Vol. 30, No.3/4 (2003): pp. 236-251.
- ¹⁰ Paul Zumthor, *Daily Life in Rembrandt's Holland*, Trans. Simon Watson Taylor (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 194.
- ¹¹ Zumthor, pp. 114-115.
- ¹² Maria Rooseboom, "Leeuwenhoek, the Man: A Son of His Nation and His Time," *Bulletin of the British Society for the History of Science*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Oct., 1950: 79-85
- ¹³ Harold J. Cook, *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine and Science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press. 2007).
- ¹⁴ "Hortus Botanicus Leiden." *Hortus Botanicus Leiden*. Web. 29 July 2011.
- ¹⁵ Maria Rooseboom, "The history of science and the Dutch collections," *Museums Journal*, (1958 Vol. lviii): 199-208),

Lesson Plan: Examining the Iconography of Golden Age Dutch Still Life Painting

Introduction

This lesson plan uses Dutch Still Life paintings to explore the impact of religious change, expansion in trade and the creation of the market economy on early modern Europe. For simplicity, the symbols in the paintings presented will be viewed through the lens of three interrelated changes in Dutch society at the time. These changes, as explained below are 1) Religious upheaval – the Reformation and its legacy; 2) Economic expansion and the creation of the modern global economy; and; 3) Exploration and scientific discovery. This lesson is intended for high school students of Global or European history who have already had some introduction to the subjects noted above. This lesson would also be appropriate for Art History students.

Grade Level: 9-12

Class Periods: 2

Guiding Questions

- How did exploration and global trade impact religion, the economy and science in early modern Europe?
- How do paintings from the Dutch Golden Age reflect seventeenth and eighteenth-century religious, economic, and scientific change?

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this lesson students should be able to:

- Investigate differing and competing interpretations of historical theories of global trading systems;
- Identify allegorical themes in these paintings;
- Understand the interrelationship between religion, the economy, and science during this period;
- Explain the importance of historical evidence in analyzing works of art;
- Analyze the scientific significance of exploration and trade, especially intercontinental trade, trade in Asia and India;
- Evaluate the influence of the Reformation on traditional power and the lives of everyday people.

Preparation Instructions

This lesson will highlight a number of Golden Age Dutch still life paintings that emphasize the changes (religious, economic, scientific) emerging during this period. They will compare and contrast these changes, and their importance, using both the paintings and reading passages from historians of the period.

Review the activities and download copies of the paintings. Files have been created for this lesson that include websites for suggested paintings, a guide to symbols, relevant reading passages, a map of Dutch trade routes, and a painting analysis/ question organizer. Each student should be provided with the guide, passages and organizer.

Lesson Activities

Day 1

- 1) Students will be divided into one of three types of groups (religion/economy/science). Depending on class size, there will be more than one group working on each category).
- 2) Each group (or table) will be provided with a map (Appendix B) 3 images, introduction from reading passages and one of the three (religion/economy/science) sets of reading passages (Appendix D) Each student will receive the graphic organizer/question set. (Appendix C)
- 3) Students will discuss the paintings answering the questions under “Identify and Note details” on graphic organizers
- 4) Each table of students will be given a list of symbols and their meanings (Appendix A)
- 5) Teacher can guide students through reading passages as necessary at each table
- 6) The students should read their passages and working together complete part 2 of the organizer based on their interpretation of the readings and the paintings.

Day 2

- 1) New groups should be formed so that each table now includes representatives from each of the three categories. Each table has copies of the paintings, symbols guide, map and complete set of passages
- 2) Students should work together to generate answers to part 3 of the organizer.

Assessment: Students should chose one painting and in a brief essay answer one of the guiding questions with reference to the painting and materials provided as well as any available outside information.

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APPENDIX A

GUIDE TO SYMBOLS – please note that as extensive as this list is, it is not conclusive and symbols may actually imply or encourage the opposite response from the viewer. For example, a symbol of wealth may intend to encourage frugality.

As for man, his days are as
 Grass; as a flower of the field, so he
 Flourisheth.
 For the wind passeth over it,
 And it is gone; and the place thereof
 Shall know it no more. (Psalm 103; 15-16)

Symbol	Interpretation
Account or Ledger books	Trade, business, wealth, also; earthly, temporary wealth
acorns	God's creation – potential of life/humans to grow from seed
Apple	Original Sin
Beer	pride in homeland (beer was a major Dutch export), wealth, simple pleasures
Birds – exotic	Wealth, trade, exploration (many exotics like Parrots and macaws came from South America)
Birds – game	Wealth, time is short
Books	knowledge, wealth, scientific inquiry; also limits of human knowledge compared to divine
Bouquet	Wealth, trade, divine love (wonder at God's work)
Bread	Everyday life, humility, Catholic host (the body of Christ)
Bubbles	Life is brief, also; science
Butter	<i>see</i> Cheese
Butterfly	The soul or transformation (caterpillar transforms to butterfly)
Candle	Life is brief, time is short
Carpet/textiles/fabrics	wealth, trade (from Asia, India, Italy)
Cat	Indiscretion or unteachable
Cheese	Encourages moderation (eating too much or in combination with butter is seen as excessive), pride, strength or wealth of Netherlands/important trade good
Cherries	The fruit of paradise
chestnuts	triumph over temptation
Chicken – roasted	Christ's sacrifice
Coins	Trade or the inadequacy of human riches compared to the divine
Columbine flower	melancholy or regret
Decay or rot	Time is short, nothing lasts forever
Deeds/Legal	<i>see</i> Account or Ledger books, above

documents	
Dog	Loyalty, or greed, laziness or war or teachable
Dolphins (may be represented on dishes or glassware)	Fidelity or friendship, exploration and discovery
Double baskets	Earthly and spiritual pleasures
Flower petals	Time is short, nothing lasts forever
Forget-me-not Flower	remembrance
Fruit basket	fertility
Gladiolus	grief or suffering – sword shape of flower stalk
Glassware	<i>see also</i> Wine and Beer. Wealth, moderation, broken or spilled may imply moderation or fleeting life.
Gold or silver serving pieces	Wealth and power (may encourage moderation if tipped over); trade – many pieces were imported from Spain or Italy
Goose	Gluttony or wealth
Grapes	Religious symbolism or symbolism of purity, can also be symbol of trade (grapes from Spain)
Herring	Humility (herring was one of the most important exports); wealth or pride in homeland
Hourglass	Time is short
Insects	Earthly bonds or time is short (insects eating or destroying objects)
Iris	Trinity – three petals, or grief or suffering (sword shape of plant stalk)
Ivy	crown or wreath around head of Christ
Jewelry	Wealth and power, exploration, science
Large grouping of items	Thoughtless pleasure, great wealth
Laurel	<i>see</i> Ivy
Lettuce	Penitence – plain food
Lily	Purity (white), Virgin Mary
Maps	Exploration and discovery, trade and wealth
meats, hams, game, lobster	wealth or transience of wealth, gluttony, temptation
Morning Glory	Light of truth (opens at daybreak)
Musical Instruments (see also violin)	Earthly pleasures or existence, wealth, trade, warnings against sinful life
Oil lamp	Time is short
Olives	Trade (from Spain) or man's peace with God (reference to Noah's Ark story) or peace generally
Onions	Humility
Oranges/lemons	trade (from Mediterranean) or exploration
Oysters	traditional aphrodisiac, temptation
Pansy	Trinity (3 petal shape)
Peaches	trade (from countries with warmer weather)

Peony flower	Trade, wealth, exploration (peonies are Asian)
Playing cards	earthly pleasures
Poppies – white	Associated with sleep and death, Passion of Christ
Porcelain dishes	Trade, wealth, exploration (from China and Japan)
Pretzel	Tension between good and evil, sexual tension/temptation
Purses	<i>see</i> Coins
Putrefaction or rotting or disintegration of objects	Beauty is only skin deep, time flies, knowledge is limited
Ribbon	Passage of time
Rose-red	Blood of Christ, thorns of Christ's crown/agony of cross, can also be Virgin Mary
Rose-white	Purity, virginity, Virgin Mary, Christ's crown of thorns
Salt	Wealth, trade, exploration
Scientific Instruments	Exploration and scientific inquiry, the inadequacy of human knowledge compared to divine.
Shells	Exploration, power and wealth, scientific discovery, time is fleeting
Skulls	Life is short – beware, put more emphasis on spiritual rather than earthly cares
Snails	Everyday life, humility
Soap bubbles	Time is short, science and scientific inquiry
Spices	Wealth, trade (spices from India and Asia)
Strawberry plants	Trinity (3 pointed leaves)
Sunflower	Divine light or trade and exploration (originally from India)
Sunshine coming through opening or reflected	God or divine light
Sweets	Childhood innocence, wealth, trade (sugar from Caribbean and Brazil)
Thorns, thistles or thorny vines or plants	Crown of thorns, Christ's sacrifice/agony
Tobacco/pipes	Exploration and trade, time is short ("For my days are consumed as smoke..." Psalm 102:3)
Trumpet	Religious regality or time is short (music can be enjoyed but then ends)
Tulip	Wealth, beauty, originally from Turkey
Violets	Humility – they grow close to the ground
Violin	learning, knowledge or warning against sinful life "The fiddle or violin is alas used more in the service of vanity than in the praise and glory of God." Ingvar Bergstrom, <u>Dutch Still-Life Painting in the Seventeenth Century</u> Trans. Christina Hedstrom and Gerald Taylor. (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, Inc. 1956) 156 (<i>De VEDEL of FIOOL</i>

	<i>die wert God better, meer Gebruyckt tot ydelheyt, als tot Godts lof en eer.</i> – Dutch poet Jan dan der Veer.)
Walnuts	The original cross of Christ/ the Crucifixion – the meat of the walnut can mean the body of Christ in contrast to the shell/the cross.
Watch	Life is short, time is fleeting, use time wisely
Water or dew drops	scientific exploration, life is short
Wheat	Bread – basic necessities, comfort, bread of Last Supper, resurrection (grains fall to earth to regenerate – so death is necessary to achieve eternal life), life is short
Window – open	The world
Window – reflection	Cross (generally); God’s light; science
Wine	Wealth, trade (wine from Spain, Portugal or France), blood of Christ (can be Catholic reference to Eucharist)

Sources for Paintings/ Museums with notable online collections:

Rijksmuseum (Amsterdam)

Louvre Museum (Paris)

Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York)

Los Angeles County Museum of Art (excellent online enlargements)

Legion of Honor Museum (San Francisco)

Museum of Fine Arts (Boston)

National Gallery of Art (Washington, DC)

Frans Hals Museum (Haarlem, NE)

APPENDIX B – MAP OF GOLDEN AGE DUTCH TRADE

<http://www.odu.edu/~mcarhart/hist102/slides/mapTrade.htm>



APPENDIX C – PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS WORKSHEET (based on Library of Congress and National Archives Models)

NAME: _____

1) OBSERVE:- Identify and note details

Describe what you see.

What objects are shown?

How are they arranged?

What do you notice about the quality of the paintings?

Are there any other details you notice?

2) REFLECT – Generate hypotheses about the paintings

Why do you think this painting was made?

Who do you think was the audience for this painting?

Do you think that anything is missing from this painting?

Are the symbols in the painting effective/understandable?

3) QUESTION –Questions which may lead to more observations and reflections

What is the message created by the painting?

Is this painting effective in conveying this message?

If this was painted today, what items would need to be included to convey a similar message?



APPENDIX D – Reading Passages

Introduction to Dutch Golden Age Society and Paintings:

“Life in Dutch society was very different [than other parts of seventeenth-century Europe], for the Republic was the entrepot of world trade, with evidence of ships and the sea everywhere ... [I]t was a society in which no one could live without continually sensing the interaction of land and sea, town and country, one town with the next, soldiers and seamen with burghers, the exotic with the mundane, and the foreign with the local. Art, by encompassing all of this, and reflecting it on everyone’s walls, and in every tavern and public building, made explicit, and heightened awareness of, what everyone saw and felt.¹

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“... [T]he tremendous flowering of the arts which began in 1590s – at the same time as the commencement of Dutch dominance in the ‘rich trades’ – a Golden Age in which artistic achievement and innovation in art proceeded on a scale, and with an intensity, which has no parallel in any other time, or place, in history. This is true not only in that a new ideological and religious framework was created but also in that an unprecedented profusion, and variety, of artists and artistic skills ... Protestants, or at least forced to adapt to a Protestant cultural milieu.”²

The Reformation and Religious Imagery

“... the image-breaking began after the Protestants had seized several churches in the city ... great heaps of art treasures and vestments ... were put to the torch, local Protestant nobles took the lead. ... The counts of Culembourg and Batenburg ordered the stripping of altars and images from the churches in mid-September. Both in the towns of Brill and the surrounding countryside, the churches were systematically stripped...”³

“Indifference and constancy arose from the exercise of the reason; the individual must learn to judge things according to their true worth. Self-knowledge, insight into the deceptive essence of the world, and the abandonment of transitory things ... To be in the world, but not of the world to learn the meaning of "Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas" -was thus the common personal and didactic exhortation [...] the importance of knowing oneself, of leading a moderate life.”⁴

· “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity” from Ecclesiastes.

Economic Expansion and Art Patronage

“The onset of Dutch world trade primacy, and the rapid urban expansion which accompanied it, created a situation, with a new merchant elite, and a newly enriched regent class, in which, suddenly, very many artists could have prosperous careers ... demand for high-quality pictures was almost insatiable.”⁵

“The French schoolmaster Jean Nicholas de Parival, who lived in Leiden for 20 years wrote in the 1660s: "I do not believe that so many good painters can be found anywhere else; also the houses are filled with very beautiful paintings and no one is so poor as not to wish to be well provided with them." His impressions have been substantiated by painstaking research into probate inventories. Even in rural Zeeland, farmers in the eighteenth century owned on average between five and ten paintings.”⁶

“This desire to acquire objects determined largely the character and development of the nation’s cultural existence during the seventeenth century, and over a period of several generations provoked a considerable demand for consumer goods. But the structure and morality of Dutch society limited the choice of these principally to things which could add to the comfort of the house or enhance its appearance.”⁷

Science and Exploration

“The fundamental qualities of the Dutch intellect expressed themselves in a liking for the concrete, a preoccupation with experimentation and practical applications and realism. All the evidence of the period bears witness to the Dutch middle class’s touching attachment to science, combined with an avid and sometimes naïve curiosity...”

...

“All sorts of amateurs built up collections of minerals, shells, plant-life, reptiles, winged creatures and embryos.”⁸

Van Leeuwenhoek’s invention of the microscope would have influenced the way in which artists viewed the world.

“The constitution of the society in which [Leeuwenhoek] lived enabled him to carry on his researches freely and to present them to the scientific world. He would, however, never have reached such height of research and fame, if good luck had not brought him into contact with the young Royal Society, that was active in establishing contacts with scientists all over Europe and was eagerly collecting knowledge of nature. It published his discoveries and drew the attention of the world to his work.”⁹

“[T]he powerful urban middle class of Holland, with its interest in the material reality around trade and profits, did not find 'practical' and manual preoccupation with the things of Nature beneath its dignity. 'This complete acceptance of the sensorily perceptible (which, by the way, is so clearly manifest also in seventeenth-century Dutch painting) created a mental climate in which new ideas and new scientific principles were able to get a firm footing straight away.’¹⁰

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⁵ Israel 350.

⁶ Maarten Prak, *Guilds and the Development of the Art Market during the Dutch Golden Age* (Simiolus, 2003). 236-251.

⁷ Paul Zumthor, Daily Life in Rembrandt's Holland Trans. Simon Watson Taylor (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press 1994) 194.

⁸ Zumthor, 114-115.

⁹ Rooseboom, Maria, Leeuwenhoek, the Man: A Son of His Nation and His Time, *Bulletin of the British Society for the History of Science* Vol. 1, No. 4 (Oct., 1950), pp. 79-85

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