

03 February 2011

Vermeer takes centre stage in new exhibition revealing intimate domestic worlds of Dutch Golden Age

Vermeer's Women: Secrets and Silence

5 October 2011 – 15 January 2012

- Cambridge exhibition to feature Vermeer's famous *Lacemaker* from the Musée du Louvre in Paris – on show in the UK for the first time – as well as three other iconic works by the artist
- Presents Vermeer in the context of masterpieces by other Dutch painters of the 'Golden Age'
- First exhibition to focus on the mysterious and enigmatic world of Vermeer's domestic interiors

The astonishing intimacy of interior scenes by Johannes Vermeer and his seventeenth-century contemporaries will be explored in a new exhibition opening in Cambridge in Autumn 2011.

At the heart of this visually stunning exhibition is Vermeer's extraordinary painting *The Lacemaker* (c.1669-70) – one of the Musée du Louvre's most famous works, rarely seen outside Paris and now on loan to the UK for the first time. The painting will be joined by a choice selection of other key works by Vermeer representing the pinnacle of his mature career, and over thirty other masterpieces of genre painting from the Dutch 'Golden Age'. Featuring works from museums and private collections in the UK, Europe and the USA – many of which have never been on public display in Britain – this Cambridge showing will be the only chance to see these masterworks brought together in one location.



Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675)
The Lacemaker (c.1669-70)

Musée du Louvre, Paris
© Réunion des Musées Nationaux/ Gérard Blot

Celebrating the eerie calm of Vermeer's carefully-crafted images of young women in domestic interiors, *Vermeer's Women: Secrets and Silence* will be the first exhibition of its kind to focus exclusively on the mysterious and enigmatic world created by Vermeer in some of the best loved and most characteristic works from his later career. The exhibition will also trace the impact of his unique compositions on contemporary masters of Dutch genre painting, including Gerard ter Borch, Gerrit Dou, Pieter de Hooch, Nicolaes Maes and Jan Steen.

The silent and evocative domestic realms depicted in this exhibition constitute some of the best loved and popular Dutch paintings of the seventeenth century. These extraordinarily private, compellingly beautiful interiors are inhabited almost exclusively by women, whom we glimpse absorbed in domestic tasks, adjusting their toilette, or immersed in pleasurable pastimes such as music making, reading or writing letters.

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Vermeer's Women: Secrets and Silence also investigates the enigmatic relationship created by the artist between viewer and subject. Whilst some figures may smilingly invite us to enter their painted surroundings - recreated by the artist with remarkably convincing realism - many avert their gaze or turn their backs, consciously evading engagement with the viewer and implying that we have stumbled upon a private world kept hidden from casual regard.

Dr Timothy Potts, Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, said: "*Vermeer's Women* will be a rare opportunity to enjoy some of Vermeer's most ravishingly beautiful paintings of the intimacy of the Dutch household – frozen moments of young women sewing, reading or playing musical instruments, captured in Vermeer's uniquely luminous style. Although domestic scenes constitute the principal subject of Vermeer's work and that of many of his contemporaries, and are one of the most distinctive and evocative aspects of Dutch art of the Golden Age, this will be the first exhibition to focus exclusively on them, and to explore their hidden significance in terms of contemporary Dutch mores.

"Equally importantly, *Vermeer's Women* will reveal the extraordinary subtlety and skill of Vermeer's finest contemporaries, many of whom were far more famous than Vermeer during their lifetimes. We are particularly delighted to be able to include in the exhibition one of Vermeer's most celebrated masterpieces, *The Lacemaker*, from the Louvre, which has never before been seen in Britain."

Vermeer's Women: Secrets and Silence will feature works from museums and collections around the world, including: the National Gallery, London; the Royal Collection; the Musée du Louvre; the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; the Mauritshuis, The Hague; and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The exhibition is guest curated by Dr Marjorie E. Wieseman, Curator of Dutch Paintings at the National Gallery, London.

- ENDS / notes for editors -

Details for publication:

Vermeer's Women: Secrets and Silence

5 October 2011 – 15 January 2012

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RB

OPEN: Tuesday – Saturday: 10.00 – 17.00
Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays: 12.00 – 17.00

Christmas and New Year closure: 24, 25, 26 and 31 December 2011 & 1 January 2012

ADMISSION FREE

Further information and images:

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Notes for Editors: The Fitzwilliam Museum

The Fitzwilliam Museum houses the University of Cambridge's art collection and is a public museum and art gallery with an international reputation. More than half a million objects and works of art are held in five curatorial departments: Antiquities, Applied Arts, Coins and Medals, Manuscripts and Printed Books and Paintings, Drawings and Prints. The Fitzwilliam's treasures range from Ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman antiquities to the arts of the 21st century and include masterpieces by Titian, Canaletto, Stubbs, Constable, Monet, Renoir and Picasso, one of the world's foremost Rembrandt print collections, Handel music manuscripts and the famous Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, one of the most significant collections of Korean ceramics outside South-East Asia, medieval illuminated manuscripts and outstanding collections of pottery, porcelain and medieval coins. The Fitzwilliam Museum welcomes over 300,000 visitors a year, offers a wide-ranging programme of temporary exhibitions and events, and has an award-winning Education Service. The Museum is open Tuesday – Saturday: 10.00 – 17.00, Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays: 12.00 – 17.00. Free admission. www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk

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