



THE LEIDEN
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Young Woman Seated at a Virginal

Johannes Vermeer
(Delft 1632 – 1675 Delft)

ca. 1672–75
oil on canvas
25.5 x 20.1 cm
JVe-100

How to cite

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This entrancing picture, the only one of Vermeer's mature works remaining in private hands, captures the quiet joy of a young woman in harmony with her music. As she gently and tenderly fingers the keyboard of her virginal, she leans slightly forward in her chair while looking out with a sympathetic expression, as though desiring to share the dulcet sounds of her instrument with the viewer. In style and execution this small masterpiece is similar to other of Johannes Vermeer's late depictions of young women playing musical instruments, including *The Guitar Player*, ca. 1670, Kenwood House, London (**fig 1**); *A Woman Standing at a Virginal*, ca. 1670–72, The National Gallery, London (**fig 2**); and *A Young Woman Seated at a Virginal*, ca. 1673–75, also in The National Gallery (**fig 3**).^[1] Aside from its comparable subject matter, this elegantly subtle painting shares with these other late works Vermeer's sensitivity to light and his subtle rendering of flesh tones. Similarities also exist in his manner of modeling of the satin skirt, the reflective front of the virginal, the distinctive geometry of the music stand, and the radiant white wall that serves a luminous backdrop for the figure.

Much of the magic of Vermeer's paintings arises from the visual restraint of his images, which gives them a timeless character despite the immediacy of his scenes. Here Vermeer has focused entirely on the woman and her instrument, giving the viewer no hint of the nature of the room in which she sits save the simple white wall behind her. All our attention, thus, is directed to her, and she responds in kind. This powerful human connection holds us in place. We find ourselves drawn into her world and imagining the quiet rhythms of the music she plays.^[2]

Comparative Figures



Fig 1. Johannes Vermeer, *The Guitar Player*, ca. 1670, oil on canvas, 53 x 46.3 cm, English Heritage, Kenwood House, London, inv. no. 88028841.



Fig 2. Johannes Vermeer, *A Young Woman Standing at a Virginal*, ca. 1670–72, oil on canvas, 53 x 46.3 cm, The National Gallery, London.

In Vermeer's *oeuvre*, music making serves the purpose of courtship. Much as with *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal*, the viewer to whom the woman looks out assumes the role of a potential suitor. The tightly wound curls, red ribbons, and the strand of small pearls in her hair indicate that she is a young lady of proper upbringing and fine sensibility. But it is the warmth of her gaze and her welcoming smile that suggests she is a real person with emotions and feelings. In this regard Vermeer was indebted to Gerard ter Borch (1617–81) and, like Ter Borch, to the women who shared his private world.^[3]

This painting has only recently been reintegrated into Vermeer's *oeuvre* after having been absent from the public's eye for many years. Indeed, the painting was not shown in public between 1907, when it was exhibited in London, and 2001 when it was included, albeit out-of-catalogue and without an attribution, in an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.^[4] Alfred Beit, who is the first documented owner of the painting, likely purchased it in the 1890s at the recommendation of Wilhelm Bode, who was his art advisor.^[5] The attribution of the painting to Vermeer was generally accepted until the mid-1940s, but debate about the rightness of that attribution intensified in subsequent years.^[6] In 1959, Lawrence Gowing, who examined the painting shortly after it had been restored, was convinced that the attribution to Vermeer was correct. He concluded that it was "the last painting we have from Vermeer's hand," and was particularly struck by the distinctive rendering of "the hands, the instrument and the space and light around them."^[7]

To try to resolve the question of attribution, *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal* was brought to the Rijksmuseum in 1963 where the museum's director Arthur van Schendel and the collector/dealer Frits Lugt were able to compare it with Vermeer's paintings in that collection. This examination is described in a letter, dated December 12, 1963, from David Carritt of Christie's, London, to Theodore (Ted) Rousseau, chief curator of European Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig 4).^[8] Van Schendel and Lugt "who had previously been slightly skeptical were completely convinced of the picture's authenticity" after seeing the painting in person. Carritt subsequently showed the work to Philip Hendy, Director of The National Gallery, London. He describes his meeting with Hendy in a letter, dated January 20, 1964, to the painting's then owner, Baron Frédéric Rolin: "He (Hendy) expressed the opinion that it was not only a fine example of Vermeer, but in many respects superior to the Vermeers already in the National Gallery" (fig 5).

These positive assessments of the painting, however, were not widely circulated, and no mention of these opinions is found in the literature on Vermeer. In 1964, *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal* was returned to its owner Baron Rolin in Brussels, where it remained largely out-of-sight and unavailable to Vermeer scholars. Neither Albert

1670–72, oil on canvas, 51.7 x 45.2 cm, National Gallery, London, inv. no. NG1383, © National Gallery, London / Art Resource, NY.



Fig 3. Johannes Vermeer, *A Young Woman Seated at a Virginal*, ca. 1673–75, oil on canvas, 51.5 x 45.5 cm, National Gallery, London, inv. no. NG2568, © National Gallery, London / Art Resource, NY.

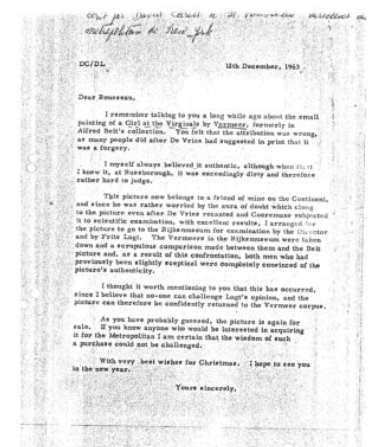


Fig 4. December 12, 1963 letter from David Carritt of Christie's, London, to Theodore (Ted) Rousseau, chief curator of European Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, describing the examination of Johannes Vermeer's *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal* by Arthur van Schendel and Frits Lugt at The Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, in 1963.

Blankert nor Arthur Wheelock, who specifically questioned the appearance of the woman's yellow shawl, accepted the attribution of this work to Vermeer in their publications from the 1970s and 1980s.^[9]

In the mid-1990s, Baron Rolin, who had, in the meantime, decided to sell *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal*, asked Gregory Rubenstein of Sotheby's to determine whether a firm attribution to Vermeer could be made. Sotheby's engaged Libby Sheldon, Catherine Hassall, and Nicola Costaras to undertake a thorough technical examination of the painting.^[10] The work was also brought in 1996 to The National Gallery, London, to be examined together with the two late Vermeer paintings in that collection. Upon viewing *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal* at this occasion, those present, including Arthur Wheelock and the National Gallery's conservators, David Bomford and Ashok Roy, all felt that the three paintings were by the same hand. In 2001, when *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal* was lent to the exhibition *Vermeer and the Delft School* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Walter Liedtke, curator of the exhibition, added the work at the end of the installation, but as an addendum to the exhibition and without giving it an attribution.^[11] Subsequently, restorations, which removed disturbing repaint prior to and after the painting's sale at Sotheby's, London, in 2004, affirmed the attribution to Vermeer of *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal*.^[12] Since that time, the painting has been universally acknowledged as one of the last, if not the last, painting that the master executed.

The results of the technical examinations undertaken by Sheldon, Hassall, and Costaras established many similarities in the materials and techniques used in this painting and those of other late works by Vermeer.^[13] These conservators determined that the painting's pale brown ground was applied in two layers and is identical in composition and application to the ground layers in the London paintings (fig 2) and (fig 3). Natural ultramarine (lapis lazuli) serves in the final paint layers not only to color blue motifs (as in the back of the chair) but also to lend a cool luminosity to the background plane and to the highlights on the forearms. Vermeer used a green pigment in the shadows on the face, as he did in the two works in The National Gallery in London (fig 2) and (fig 3), and in the Kenwood House painting (fig 1). Finally, much as in other paintings, Vermeer created the orthogonal lines of the virginal by snapping onto the primed canvas chalked strings running to a pin stuck in the canvas at a point coincident with the woman's shoulder.^[14]

The most dramatic information revealed by technical examinations of the painting came from X-radiography and infrared reflectography, which revealed that a fully realized garment existed under the woman's yellow shawl.^[15] This earlier garment had

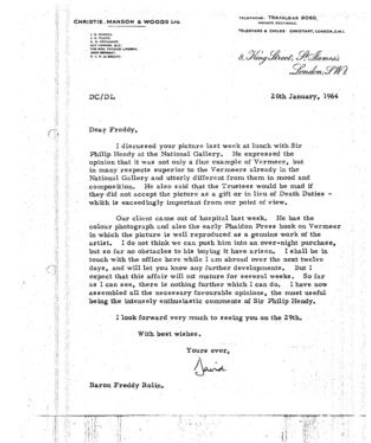


Fig 5. January 20, 1964 letter from David Carritt of Christie's, London, to Baron Frédéric Rolin, then owner of Johannes Vermeer's *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal*, describing the examination of the painting by Sir Philip Henty, Director of the National Gallery, London, in 1964.



Fig 6. X-radiograph of *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal*, The Leiden Collection, New York.



Fig 7. Johannes Vermeer, *The Lacemaker*, ca. 1669–71, oil on canvas, 24.5 x 21 cm, Musée du

a lower neckline and an intricately designed sleeve that leads gracefully from the neck to the woman's arms (**fig 6**). Strikingly, Vermeer modelled this underlying garment in a manner comparable to that in *The Guitar Player*, Kenwood House (**fig 1**). Liedtke, who displayed *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal* with the Metropolitan Museum's permanent collection in 2009, has convincingly suggested that this garment had a fur trim similar to that of the jacket of the woman playing the guitar.^[16]

Pigment analysis has also determined that the lead-tin yellow paint used to model the undergarment and yellow shawl are slightly different. V.G.M. Sivel was able to discern that the underlying garment was executed with pure lead-tin yellow paint whereas the lead-tin yellow paint used for the large yellow shawl was mixed with a quantity of organic yellow lake. He also found large particles of feldspar, presumably contaminants from Delftware production, that had settled between these two layers of paint.^[17] The distinction in the character of the lead-tin yellow paint used to model these two garments, as well as the existence of feldspar between the two layers of paint, suggests that the garments were executed a few years apart.

Whether Vermeer, himself, returned to rework the yellow garment, or whether another artist reworked the yellow garment, had long been an outstanding question.^[18] However, technical research undertaken at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, in advance of the exhibition *Vermeer* of 2023 conclusively determined that the shawl was not painted by a later hand. According to the exhibition catalogue, the yellow shawl was "an alteration made by Vermeer himself during the painting process. In the initial design, the pleats of the satin skirt extend under the shawl, but in the final paint layers they do not continue, stopping instead at the shawl's edge. This confirms that the shawl and skirt were elaborated at the same stage."^[19] The exhibition catalogue concludes unequivocally that Vermeer painted *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal* in its entirety.

This information raises numerous questions about the dating of the painting, the reasons Vermeer decided to revise this composition, and the timing of this intervention. The connections noted above between *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal* and *The Guitar Player* (**fig 1**) (in both style of painting and character of the underlying garment) suggest that Vermeer probably began painting this work in the early 1670s. An analysis of the thread counts of the painting's canvas by C. Richard Johnson and Don H. Johnson reinforces this dating. These researchers have determined that Vermeer painted *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal* on a canvas cut from the same bolt as *The Lacemaker* in the Musée du Louvre, Paris, which is generally dated ca. 1669–71 (**fig 7**).^[20]

The variance in approach between the underlying and final versions of the yellow shawl, however, is quite substantial and suggest that some time passed before

Louvre, Paris, inv. no. M.I. 1448, ©
Gianni Dagli Orti / The Art Archive at
Art Resource, NY.

Vermeer revised the garment. The broad, sweeping folds, with their sharp, unmodulated edges, are quite different from Vermeer's more nuanced manner of painting in the early 1670s, as seen, for example, in the yellow jacket in Vermeer's *The Guitar Player* (**fig 1**). It was largely because of the distinctive executions of this shawl that the attribution to the artist, or at least of the yellow shawl, has been contested in the past.^[21] The closest comparison to the expressive character of this yellow shawl is the modelling of the blue dress in *A Young Woman Seated at the Virginal* in the National Gallery, London (**fig 3**), which, for stylistic reasons, likely dates around 1673–75.^[22] In both works one finds broad sweeping folds with little modulation between the highlights on their ridges and the shadowed pockets between them. It is thus likely that Vermeer returned to the Leiden Collection's *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal* at about this time to replace the underlying yellow garment with the yellow shawl.

Vermeer probably made this revision to update the woman's clothing so that it would be compatible with the more flowing style of dress fashionable in the mid-1670s. Ermine-bordered yellow jackets, such as the one seen in *The Guitar Player* (**fig 1**), went out of favor after 1672, the devastating *Rampjaar* (Disaster Year) when French and German forces invaded The Netherlands. The flowing shawl gave the young woman a more timeless, classical look than evident in her previous mode of dress. Although the hostilities during the *Rampjaar* negatively affected the art market, it seems unlikely that Vermeer stopped painting in 1672, as some have postulated.^[23] Indeed, after Vermeer's death in December 1675, the artist's widow, Catharina Bolnes (ca. 1631–87), lamented that he had “been able to earn very little or hardly anything at all” because of the war with the King of France.^[24] At his death Vermeer left “ten painter's canvases” among the supplies in his studio, another indication that he was still active as a painter.^[25] Much as Gowing postulated, Vermeer likely made his revisions to *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal* during the last year of his life. Whether he did so on his own initiative or because of a patron's request is a fascinating question that, tantalizingly, remains open.

- Walter A. Liedtke, Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., 2017; revised by Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., 2023

Endnotes

1. The chronology of Vermeer's late paintings is difficult to establish. The proposed dates for these dates are those found in Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. *Vermeer & the Art of Painting* (New Haven, 1995), 183–86. Most scholars, including Bart Cornelis, "Musical Appeal," in *Vermeer*, ed. Pieter Roelofs and Gregor J.M. Weber (exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (London, 2023), date all these paintings to ca. 1670–72. There is no evidence, however, that Vermeer stopped painting in 1672 even though the art market deteriorated drastically during the *Rampjaar* (Disaster Year).
2. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., *The Collection of the National Gallery of Art Systematic Catalogues: Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century* (Washington, D.C., 1995), 387–93, ill.
3. Vermeer and Ter Borch knew one another. See the biographies of Vermeer and Ter Borch in this catalogue.
4. London, Burlington Fine Arts Club, "A Collection of Pictures, Decorative Furniture and Other Works of Art," 1907, no. 13 [lent by Otto Beit]; New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, "Vermeer and the Delft School," 8 March–27 May 2001; London, National Gallery, 20 June–16 September 2001 [lent by Baron Frédéric Rolin].
5. Wilhelm Bode, *The Art Collection of Mr. Alfred Beit at His Residence 26 Park Lane London* (Berlin, 1904), 9. The painting's earlier provenance is not known.
6. Among those who questioned the attribution at that time were Ary Bob de Vries, *Jan Vermeer van Delft*, London, 1948, 68, no. 39 (as by an early-19th-century imitator of Vermeer); Pieter T. A. Swillens, *Johannes Vermeer, Painter of Delft 1632-1675*, Utrecht, 1950, 63, 108, 154, no. 30 (listed under "Dubious Works"); and Ludwig Goldscheider, *Johannes Vermeer: The Paintings, Complete Edition*, London, 1958, 5, 144, no. 6 (as uncertain attribution).
7. Lawrence Gowing, letter to Marlborough Fine Art, London, May 20, 1959. A copy of this letter is in The Leiden Collection curatorial files. The restoration of the painting at this time also persuaded Ludwig Goldscheider that the attribution to Vermeer was correct. See: Ludwig Goldscheider, *Johannes Vermeer: The Paintings Complete Edition*, rev. ed., London, 1967, 133, no. 33.
8. David Carritt of Christie's, London, arranged this examination of the painting at the Rijksmuseum.
9. In a letter to the painting's then owner Baron Rolin, dated November 4, 1976, Albert Blankert proposed that the painting was executed by an artist familiar with Vermeer. A copy of this letter is in The Leiden Collection curatorial files. Blankert did not include the painting in his monographs on Vermeer: Albert Blankert, *Johannes Vermeer van Delft, 1632–1675: Complete Edition of the Paintings* (Utrecht, 1975. Reprint, Oxford, 1978); and Albert Blankert, Gilles Aillaud, and John Michael Montias, *Vermeer* (New York, 1988). In 1981, Arthur Wheelock described the painting as "by circle of Vermeer" in Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., *Jan Vermeer* (New York, 1981), 45, no. 53. In 1998, Ben Broos described the painting as a twentieth-century imitation. See: Ben Broos, "Vermeer: Malice and Misconception,"

In *Vermeer Studies*, edited by Ivan Gaskell and Michiel Jonker (Washington, D.C., 1998), 27, 29, fig. 14, 33n58 (as by unidentified artist).

10. Libby Sheldon and Nicola Costaras, "Johannes Vermeer's *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal*," *The Burlington Magazine* 148 (2006): 89–97.
11. Walter Liedtke, ed., *Vermeer and the Delft School* (exh. cat., New York, Metropolitan Museum of New York; London, The National Gallery) (New York, 2001), 403, 406n11, 581n46. The painting was subsequently also shown in the London venue.
12. Sale, Sotheby's, London, 7 July 2004, no. 8. At this sale, the painting was acquired by Steve Wynn. In 2008, Wynn sold this painting, as well as Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait with Shaded Eyes*, 1634 to the present owner.
13. Libby Sheldon and Nicola Costaras, "Johannes Vermeer's *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal*," *The Burlington Magazine* 148 (2006): 89–97.
14. Jørgen Wadum reported thirteen cases of a pinhole at the vanishing point in canvases by Vermeer, in his article "Vermeer in Perspective," in Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., *Johannes Vermeer* (exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis; Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art) (New Haven, 1995), 67, 71.
15. For a full description of these changes, see Libby Sheldon and Nicola Costaras, "Johannes Vermeer's *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal*," *The Burlington Magazine* 148 (2006): 95–96.
16. Walter Liedtke, *Vermeer: The Complete Paintings* (New York, 2008), 176. Liedtke based his conclusion on an infrared photo of the Vermeer painting published in Libby Sheldon and Nicola Costaras, "Johannes Vermeer's *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal*," *The Burlington Magazine* 148 (2006), fig. 31.
17. V.G.M. Sivel, et al. "The Cloak of *Young Vermeer Seated at a Virginal*: Vermeer, or a Later Hand?" *Art Matters: Netherlands Technical Studies in Art* 4 (2007): 90–96, determined that the lower yellow layer consists of a pure form of lead-tin yellow. The upper yellow cloak layer has been mixed with a quantity of organic yellow lake. Their research also discovered that there were large particles of feldspar between the two paint layers, which only occur along the interface (absent elsewhere in the paint stratigraphy). This discovery also suggests that a certain period existed between the application of paint in the first garment and that of the final version of the shawl. Potassium feldspar was abundant in Delftware production (near the vicinity of Vermeer's workshop) and this contaminant likely settled on the painting while it lay uncovered in Vermeer's studio.
18. Libby Sheldon and Nicola Costaras, "Johannes Vermeer's *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal*," *The Burlington Magazine* 148 (2006): 96. They write: "While the luminosity and finely modelled passages of the skirt closely echo those of *A Young Woman Standing at a Virginal* in the National Gallery, the apparent inelegance of the shawl is less easy to elucidate. The hypothesis of a later hand being responsible for it can neither be substantiated nor ruled out on the basis of the evidence provided by the cross-sections of the paint layers."

Bart Cornelis, "Musical Appeal," in *Vermeer*, ed. Pieter Roelofs and Gregor J.M. Weber (exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (London, 2023), 226. The technical research was conducted by the Vermeer

research team and will be published in 2025.

19. Bart Cornelis, “Musical Appeal,” in *Vermeer*, ed. Pieter Roelofs and Gregor J.M. Weber (exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (London, 2023), 226. The technical research was conducted by the Vermeer research team and will be published in 2025.
20. Walter Liedtke, C. Richard Johnson Jr., and Don H. Johnson, “Canvas Matches in Vermeer: A Case Study in the Computer Analysis of Fabric Supports,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 47 (2012): 101–8. Paintings from the same bolt of canvas could have a range of dates depending on how quickly the artist worked and used up his materials at hand. For stylistic reasons, it is likely that *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal* dates a few years after *The Lacemaker*. For further discussion on this matter, see Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., “The Scientific Examination of Works of Art: Its Potentials and Its Limitations,” in *Counting Vermeer: Using Weave Maps to Study Vermeer’s Canvases*, ed. C. Richard Johnson Jr. and William A. Sethares, RKD Studies, The Hague, October 2017.
21. The 2017 and 2020 archived versions of this entry, written by Walter A. Liedtke and Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., read: “The skirt came up in gathered folds to the waist, and the broad swag of drapery from the elbows to the back of the chair was not present originally. Pigment analysis has also determined that this undergarment was executed with a different mixture of lead-tin yellow paint than that of the shawl. The probability, thus, is that the shawl was a later addition, likely executed shortly after Vermeer’s death.”
22. For arguments for this dating, see Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., *Johannes Vermeer* (exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis; Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art) (New Haven, 1995), 196–203. This late date, which Albert Blankert also proposed (see Albert Blankert, *Johannes Vermeer van Delft, 1632–1675: Complete Edition of the Paintings* [Utrecht, 1975. Reprint, Oxford, 1978], cat. 31), differs from that of Bart Cornelis who, in the Rijksmuseum Vermeer catalogue, dates the painting ca. 1670–72. See Bart Cornelis, “Musical Appeal,” in *Vermeer*, ed. Pieter Roelofs and Gregor J.M. Weber (exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (London, 2023), 225. Cornelis dates *A Young Woman Seated at a Virginal* and *A Young Woman Standing at a Virginal*, both in The National Gallery, London, to ca. 1670–72, in part because they are on canvases from the same bolt of cloth (see Walter Liedtke, C. Richard Johnson Jr., and Don H. Johnson, “Canvas Matches in Vermeer: A Case Study in the Computer Analysis of Fabric Supports,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 47 [2012]: 105). However, as mentioned in note 19, paintings from the same bolt of canvas could have a range of dates depending on how quickly the artist worked and used up his materials at hand.
23. Pieter Roelofs, “Johannes Vermeer (Delft 1632–1675) Modestly Masterful,” in *Vermeer*, ed. Pieter Roelofs and Gregor J.M. Weber (exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (London, 2023), 35.
24. John Michael Montias, *Vermeer and His Milieu: A Web of Social History* (Princeton, 1989), 344–45, doc. 367. This lament indicates that Vermeer continued to try to sell paintings during this difficult period, likely both as an artist and an art dealer.
25. John Michael Montias, *Vermeer and His Milieu: A Web of Social History* (Princeton, 1989), 341, under doc. 364. These canvases were most likely stretched and primed but otherwise unpainted.

Provenance

- Possibly Pieter Claesz van Ruijven (1624–74), Delft; by descent to his son-in-law, Jacob Dissius (1653–95) (his sale, Amsterdam, 16 May 1696, no. 37 [for 42 guilders 10 stuivers]); or possibly Nicholas van Assendelft (1630–92), Delft; by descent to his widow, Maria Magdalena van den Hoeff (1624–1711), Delft.
- (Possible sale, Amsterdam, 11 July 1714, no. 12 [for 55 florins])
- Possibly Wessel Ryers (his sale, Amsterdam, 21 September 1814, no. 93 [for 30 florins to Willem Gruyter]).
- [Willem Gruyter the Elder (1763–1832), Amsterdam.]
- Alfred Beit (1853–1906), London, by 1904; by descent to his brother, Sir Otto Beit (1865–1930), 1st Baronet, London; by descent to his widow, Lilian Carter Beit (1874–1946); by descent to her son, Sir Alfred Lane Beit (1903–94), 2nd Baronet, Russborough House, Ireland [through Marlborough Fine Art, London; (to Baron Frédéric Rolin)].
- Baron Frédéric Rolin (1919–2001), Brussels, 1960; by descent (sale, Sotheby's, London, 7 July 2004, no. 8 [to Steve Wynn]).
- Steve Wynn (b. 1942), Las Vegas, 2004 [through Otto Naumann Ltd., New York].^[1]
- From whom acquired by the present owner in 2008.

Provenance Notes

1. Rembrandt van Rijn's *Self-Portrait with Shaded Eyes*, now in The Leiden Collection, was also formerly in the collection of Steve Wynn.

Exhibition History

- London, Burlington Fine Arts Club, "A Collection of Pictures, Decorative Furniture and Other Works of Art," 1907, no. 13 [lent by Otto Beit].
- New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, "Vermeer and the Delft School," 8 March–27 May 2001; London, National Gallery, 20 June–16 September 2001 [lent by Baron Frédéric Rolin].
- Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art, on loan with the permanent collection, 11 August 2004–1 March 2005 [lent by Steve Wynn].
- Tokyo, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum, "Vermeer and the Delft Style," 2 August–14 December 2008, no. 31 [lent by the present owner].



- New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, on loan with the permanent collection, 29 December 2008–30 November 2009 [lent by the present owner].
- Norfolk, Virginia, Chrysler Museum of Art, on loan with the permanent collection, 19 August 2010–January 2011 [lent by the present owner].
- Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, “Vermeer’s Women: Secrets and Silence,” 17 September 2011–15 January 2012, no. 28 [lent by the present owner].
- Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, on loan with the permanent collection, 24 January–September 2012 [lent by the present owner].
- Rome, Scuderie Del Quirinale, “Johannes Vermeer and the Golden Age of Dutch Art,” 27 September 2012–20 January 2013 [lent by present owner].
- Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, on loan with the permanent collection, January–June 2013 [lent by the present owner].
- London, National Gallery, “Vermeer and Music: The Art of Love and Leisure,” 25 June–8 September 2013, no. 25 [lent by the present owner].
- Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art, on loan with the permanent collection, 26 October 2013–21 September 2014 [lent by the present owner].
- Raleigh, North Carolina Museum of Art, “Small Treasures: Rembrandt, Vermeer, Hals, and Their Contemporaries,” 26 October 2014–4 January 2015; Birmingham, Birmingham Museum of Art, 4 February 2015–26 April 2015, no. 44 [lent by the present owner].
- Dallas, Dallas Museum of Art, “Vermeer Suite: Music in 17th-Century Dutch Painting,” 17 January–21 August 2016 [lent by the present owner].
- Paris, Musée du Louvre, “Vermeer and the Masters of Genre Painting,” 22 February–22 May 2017, no. 18 [lent by the present owner].
- Beijing, National Museum of China, “Rembrandt and His Time: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection,” 17 June–3 September 2017, no. 69 [lent by the present owner].
- Shanghai, Long Museum, West Bund, “Rembrandt, Vermeer and Hals in the Dutch Golden Age: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection,” 23 September 2017–25 February 2018 [lent by the present owner].
- Moscow, The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, “The Age of Rembrandt and Vermeer: Masterpieces of The Leiden Collection,” 28 March–22 July 2018, no. 4 [lent by the present owner].
- St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum, “The Age of Rembrandt and Vermeer: Masterpieces of The Leiden Collection,” 5 September 2018–13 January 2019, no. 4 [lent by the present owner].
- Abu Dhabi, Louvre Abu Dhabi, “Rembrandt, Vermeer and the Dutch Golden Age. Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection and the Musée du Louvre,” 14 February–18 May 2019, no. 85 [lent by the present owner].
- Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, “Vermeer,” 10 February–4 June 2023, no. 37 [lent by the present owner].

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Technical Summary

The support, a single piece of medium-weight, plain-weave fabric, has been lined.^[1] The weave has slightly thicker threads every centimeter in the vertical and horizontal directions. The vertical threads run perfectly vertically while the horizontal threads slope downward when viewed left to right. All four tacking margins have been removed and there is slight cusping along all four edges. There is a green wax collection seal and numerical inscriptions along the stretcher and two red import stamps along the lining.

In 2010, the Thread Count Automation Project (TCAP) determined weave matches link the supports of JVe-100, dated ca. 1670, and the Louvre’s *Lacemaker*, dated ca. 1669–70.^[2] Johnson and Johnson’s report states: “Presuming Vermeer purchased canvas in sizes larger than his paintings, a weave match is strong evidence that both, now separate, canvases were once joined and both in Vermeer’s possession. This argues for the authenticity of one half of a matching pair to carry over to the other half of the pair.” This confirms L. Sheldon and N. Costaras’s findings published in *The Burlington Magazine* (February 2006) that “a painting of a similar size to ‘A Young Woman Seated at a Virginal,’ the ‘Lacemaker,’ is on a canvas made of precisely

the same type of rather coarse thread and has exactly the same thread count. . . . So similar is the appearance of the two canvases that they could well be from the same bolt.”^[3]

A light gray ground has been applied in at least two layers followed by a thin red-brown imprimatura glaze.^[4] The paint has been applied dark to light, although dark glazes have been applied over the lighter brown paint along the drapery folds of the yellow shawl to enhance the illusion of depth. The composition’s perspective lines converge in the yellow shawl draped over the figure’s shoulder. A previously filled and inpainted point in the shawl, below and slightly to the left of the two white pearls along the figure’s neck, may be the vanishing point.^[5]

No underdrawing is readily apparent in infrared images captured at 780–1000 nanometers. The images indicate the yellow shawl was applied after the vertical folds of the skirt were painted. Dark pentimenti through the figure’s hands and wrists indicate the figure was painted after the virginal.

The painting is unsigned and undated.

The painting was cleaned and restored prior to acquisition in 2004 and remains in a good state of preservation.

Technical Summary Endnotes

1. Narrow remnants of primed canvas remain along all but the left edge.
2. TCAP codirectors Dr. C. Richard Johnson Jr. of Cornell University and Dr. Don H. Johnson of Rice University.
3. *The Burlington Magazine* 148 (February 2006): 89–97.
4. From page one of the painting analysis report by C. Hassall and L. Sheldon, UCL Painting Analysis Ltd, May 1997 (on file at the Leiden Collection).
5. Ca. 1 cm below and slightly to the left of the two white pearls along the figure’s neck.