

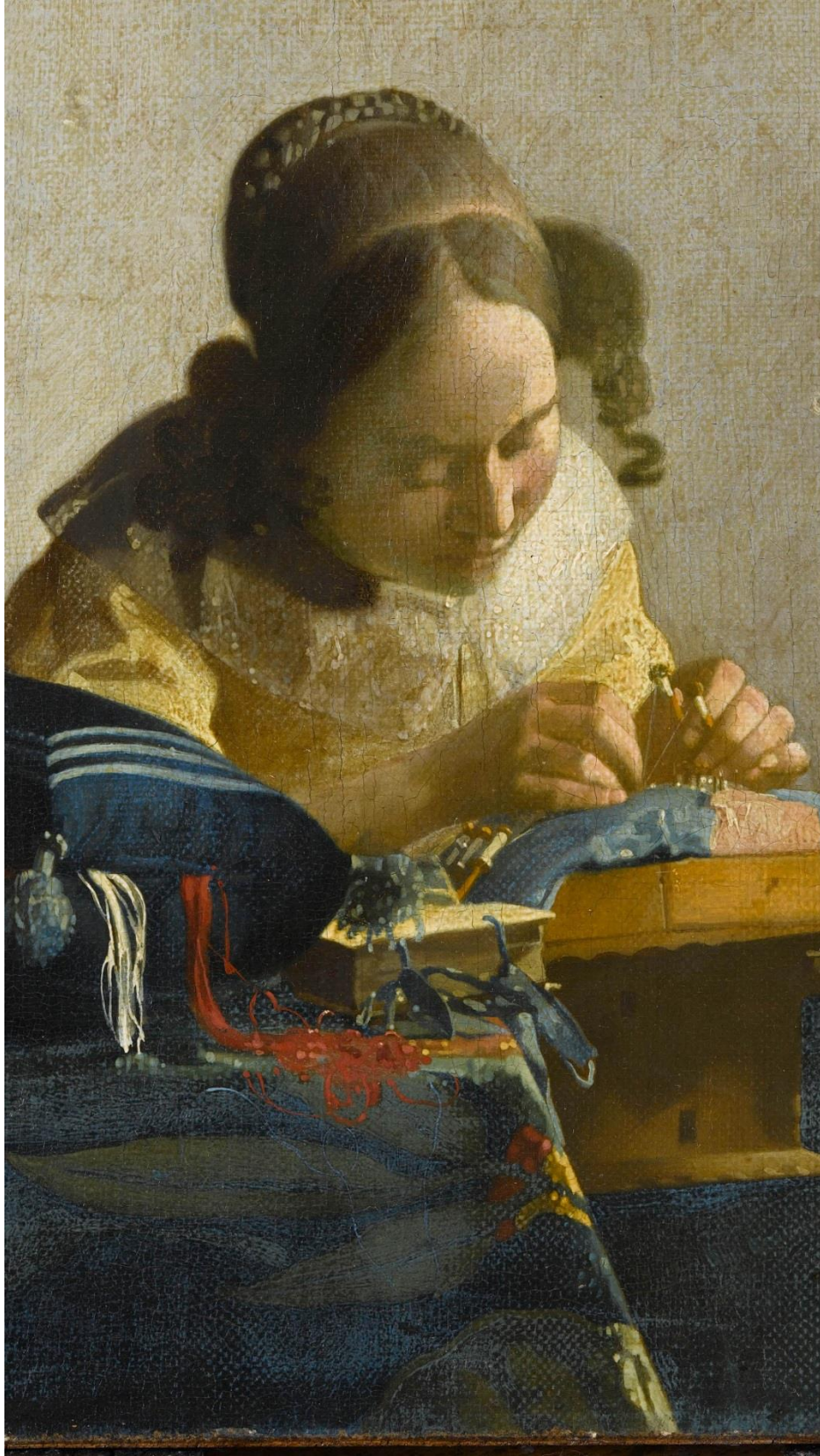
History Revived: Dutch Artists Rembrandt And Vermeer Showing At Louvre Abu Dhabi

24 February 2019 | AYESHA SOHAIL SHEHMIR SHAIKH



The Dutch masters of the 17th century come to the Louvre, Abu Dhabi in Rembrandt, Vermeer and the Dutch Golden Age: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection

Marking the 350th anniversary of Dutch painter Rembrandt Van Rijn's death, the legacy that the artist has left behind lives on for generations to come and makes a special appearance in Abu Dhabi. In collaboration with the Leiden Collection and Musée du Louvre, Rembrandt, Vermeer and the *Dutch Golden Age: Masterpieces* from The Leiden Collection and the Musée du Louvre opened at the Louvre Abu Dhabi on 12 February. More than 90 paintings, sculptures and drawings adorn the walls of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, marking the largest exhibition of works by the 17th century Dutch painters to be held in the Gulf region. "We are looking for masterpieces, and with the masters of the Dutch Golden age, we've got it," says Souraya Noujaim, the scientific, curatorial and collections management director of the Louvre Abu Dhabi.

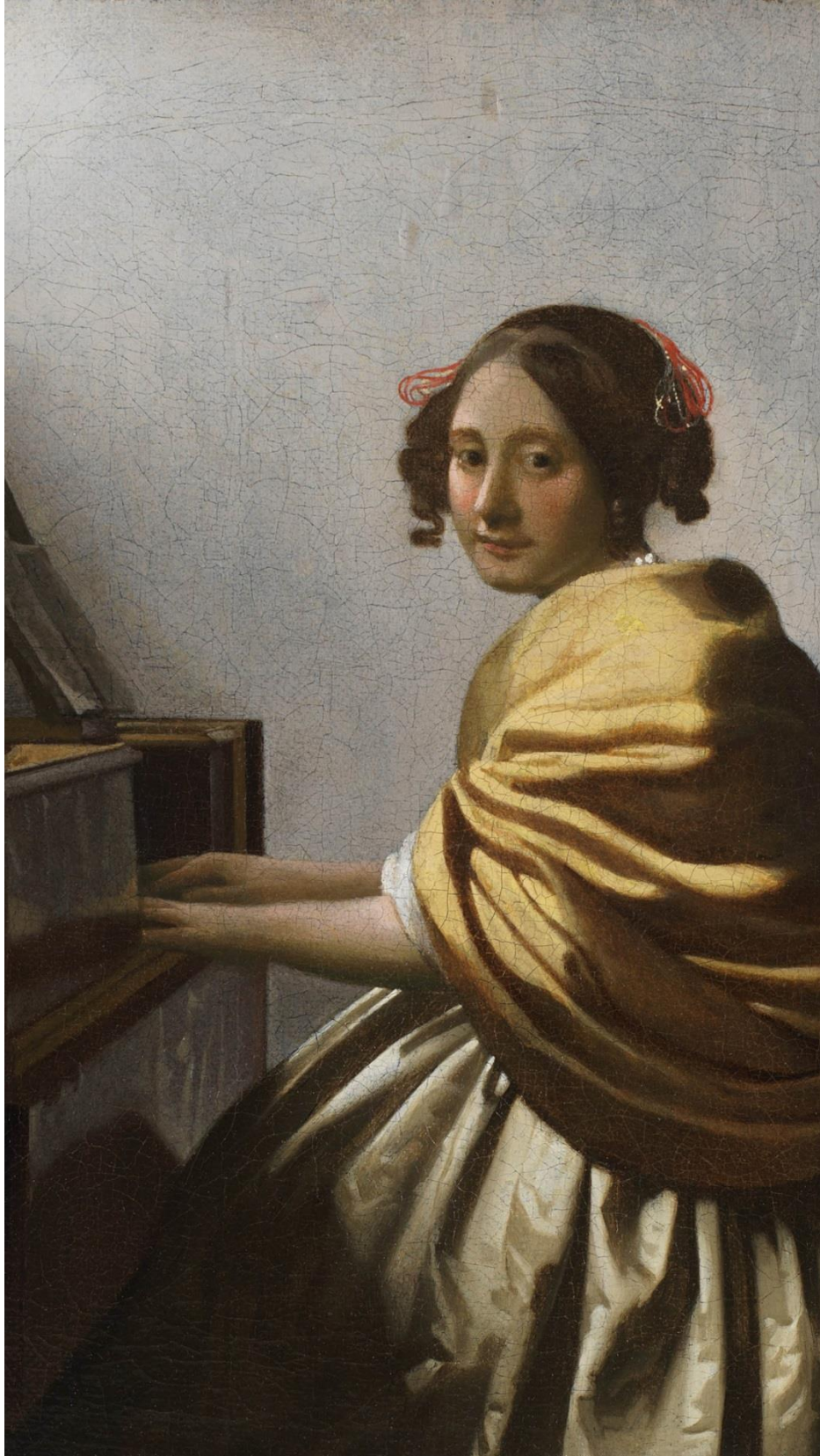


*Johannes Vermeer. The Lacemaker. ca. 1669-70.
Oil on canvas mounted on panel.*

Famed for capturing the human soul in his paintings, Rembrandt certainly captivated Thomas Kaplan, the founder and owner of the Leiden Collection, from the age of six. “I think it’s almost impossible to believe that at that young age, I had the ability to internalise the very adult nature of Rembrandt’s narrative and of what Rembrandt was trying to remind us of and inspire us,” says Kaplan. “I couldn’t have understood it at that age, and yet, something connected immediately and so it wasn’t a simple impression, it was a very, very deep connection. What it was? I can’t say. You get older, your frame of reference widens, you learn about love and loss and it changes.”

In addition to the works by Rembrandt, the exhibition is home to Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer’s renowned *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal*, hung adjacent to his *The Lacemaker*. It wasn’t until Cornell University in New York conducted an extensive case study using computer algorithms, that a remarkable discovery was made: the two paintings, do in fact, originate from the same bolt of canvas. “I invite our audience just to come and contemplate the paintings which are absolutely beautiful,” says Noujaim. The paintings are displayed next to each other after approximately three centuries, marking a significant milestone in Dutch art history. “When you think of it in that way, it takes you back, and makes you feel as if you’re present at the time of creation,” says Kaplan. “When you see paintings that were literally created to be together, it’s especially gratifying.”

Kaplan found his calling in Rembrandt’s work when he was a little boy, through museum visits with his mother to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art. He was in awe when he encountered Rembrandt’s *Aristotle with a bust of Homer*. Beholding the work, he says, still takes him back 50 years. “It’s a particular pleasure and it reminds me of when I fell in love with Rembrandt, it reminds me of my mother,” he says. “When you see the connection between children and art, and the impact that it can have, it’s deeply moving.” Kaplan found himself sharing a similar eye for creativity with his wife, Dafna Recanati Kaplan, who avidly collects 20th century modern furniture. “Her passion and the way that she collected in depth and knowledge, set the standard for the way that we went about collecting Dutch paintings,” he says.



*Johannes Vermeer. Young Woman Seated at a Virginal.
ca. 1670-72. Oil on canvas.*

The exhibition also showcases works by the two Dutch masters' contemporaries, particularly a school of painters that played an important role during the Dutch Golden Age known as the Fijnschilders, translating to "fine painters." The Leiden collection provides an insight into the outburst of creativity that shaped the Dutch Golden Age during the 17th century, and the influence that it had on genre painting. In particular, the *Woman at Her Toilet, Assisted by a Black Servant* and *Young Woman Feeding a Parrot* are two panel paintings displayed together that capture the heart of the collection. "The exquisite quality of the fabrics and the rendition of the details are extremely stylish and those paintings would have been praised, valued, appreciated as jewels," says Blaise Ducos, the chief curator of Dutch and Flemish paintings at the Musée du Louvre.

Through the Louvre Abu Dhabi's compelling displays, art lovers can appreciate the true beauty and authenticity of each work, admiring the history that each continues to emanate.

Rembrandt, Vermeer and the Dutch Golden Age: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection and the Musée du Louvre is on show at Louvre Abu Dhabi until 18th May 2019



Frans van Mieris the Elder. Young Woman Feeding a Parrot. 1663. Oil on panel.