

## THE ART OF DESCRIBING THE DUTCH GOLDEN AGE

FRIDAY 5 – THURSDAY 11 OCTOBER 2018 (7 DAYS)

LECTURER: TOM DUNCAN

£2370

- **Explore the Dutch Golden Age via a visit concentrating on their greatest artists: Rembrandt, Vermeer, Hals and others**
- **All the important galleries in The Hague and Amsterdam included**
- **Some of Holland's most picturesque cities and towns such as Rotterdam, Delft & Haarlem will be visited**
- **We stay in two comfortable and centrally located hotels, ideal for gently paced exploration, close to excellent restaurants**



Frans Hals, detail from *Portrait of a Couple*,  
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

### OVERVIEW

The seventeenth century is considered the Dutch Golden Age; a time when social change, economic development and the sciences and arts were part of a cultural blossoming of unprecedented vigour. This came after a long struggle between the Habsburgs, the traditional rulers of the Low Countries, and their recalcitrant Calvinist subjects who fought to free themselves from Spanish rule. Finally achieved after decades of war, with the Peace of Westphalia signed in 1648, this consolidated an already developing Dutch prosperity based on trade with the wider world, especially the Far East, reflected most visibly in painting and the decorative arts.

Mention Dutch art and a handful of names immediately come to mind: Hals, Vermeer, Ruisdael, Dou, Steen and Rembrandt. However, given that hundreds of artists plied their trade during this period, with many different genres of art produced (from landscape to scenes of everyday life, moral sermons in paint and some of the most penetrating portraits in the western tradition) not everything painted is what it seems, an often unsuspected ambiguity which we shall explore.

Given the military leadership provided by the House of Orange during the religious wars, and its subsequent adoption as the Dutch royal house, it is appropriate that we begin our visit in The Hague, the capital of the Netherlands. Naturally, royal buildings dominate this chic city, none more so than the newly restored and rehung Mauritshuis with its superlative Dutch and Flemish paintings. From here we shall also visit Rotterdam to see the Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum with paintings across many periods and styles – almost Rembrandt to Rothko. An afternoon in the pretty town of Delft, forever associated with Vermeer, will complete this Sunday excursion.

Moving on to Amsterdam we shall have an introduction to its history via canal boat and on foot. The stunningly rearranged Rijksmuseum will be the focus of two guided visits, with excursions also to the Hermitage Amsterdam Museum and the intimate Rembrandt House Museum. Given the city hosts more than forty different museums and galleries, ample free time will be included so that participants can visit independently those of particular interest, ranging from the Van Gogh Museum to the Botanical Garden.

On our final day we drive out to Haarlem, one of the most atmospheric of Dutch towns, its artistic past dominated by the career of Frans Hals. The museum devoted to his life and work is both intimate and charming, and will be a fitting end to what should be an exciting week full of revelatory discoveries.

In The Hague we stay at the 4\* Hotel Carlton Ambassador and in Amsterdam at the 4\* Estherea, ideally situated on the Singel Canal and close to the exclusive '9 Streets' shopping district. Both hotels are either within easy walking distance, or a short tram ride, of all we shall visit, with excellent restaurants nearby.

## ITINERARY OUTLINE

**Day 1:** Friday 5 October – We fly from Heathrow to Amsterdam and travel by coach to **The Hague**. This has been the political and administrative heart of The Netherlands and the seat of the Royal House of Orange since the seventeenth century and as such, its fine array of buildings reflects this role. It is a charming place and we shall be based here for three nights, staying at the comfortable **4\* Carlton Ambassador Hotel**. We shall have an introductory walk in the city centre late afternoon and there will be a group dinner that evening.

**Day 2:** Saturday 6 October – We drive to **Delft** this morning where we explore the city where Vermeer lived and worked. We continue to the bustling port city of **Rotterdam**, with our goal the **Boijmans van Beuningen Museum** which is an unexpected treasury of Flemish and Dutch works, together with more modern pieces from the Impressionists up to Rothko – truly eclectic. We have a group lunch today, and a free evening on our return to The Hague.

**Day 3:** Sunday 7 October – Our day will be spent exploring The Hague, concentrating on some of its museums and other important sites. First amongst these is the **Mauritshuis**, the splendid mansion which houses the Royal Picture Gallery and which contains masterpieces such as Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* and Rembrandt's *Anatomy Lesson of Dr Tulp*. In complete contrast we shall also visit one of the former royal palaces, **Het Paleis**, to see the remarkable work of graphic artist, M.C. Escher. After lunch, not included, the **Panorama Mesdag**, a vast panorama of the coastal scene at Scheveningen from 1881, will come as a surprise. As the city centre is *en fête* on Saturday afternoons, there will also be some time to explore independently and the evening will be free.

**Day 4:** Monday 8 October – This morning we drive to **Amsterdam** and begin with the first of two visits to the **Rijksmuseum**, the city's unparalleled collection of Dutch art. All of the major (and some of the minor) masters of the Dutch school are represented, newly redisplayed in rooms full of decorative arts of the highest quality. Our first visit will concentrate on the renaissance and seventeenth century collections. After some free time for lunch in the museum, not included, we board a private boat for a **Canal Cruise**, the ideal introduction to the city, ending just by our hotel, the **4\* Estherea**, where we stay for three nights. We have a group dinner later that evening.

**Day 5:** Tuesday 9 October – Three museums, all totally different in focus: the **City Museum** tells the story of Amsterdam in remarkable fashion; the **Hermitage Amsterdam** is devoted to loan exhibitions from its St Petersburg parent but is housed in a magnificent historic property; the **Rembrandthuis Museum** is the former home of the Golden Age's most remarkable artist. It will be an extraordinary day and no meals are included to allow participants to enjoy the variety of cuisines on offer in this remarkable melting pot of a city.

**Day 6:** Wednesday 10 October – We return to the **Rijksmuseum** for a second morning visit, this time concentrating on the post seventeenth century paintings and works of art. Who would expect to find some of the ultra-rare examples of Piranesi's non engraved work in Holland? Well, these, and much else which will surprise, are here. The rest of the day will be free for independent exploration and we meet again for our final group dinner.

**Day 7:** Thursday 11 October – We leave for **Haarlem**, a pretty town not far from Amsterdam, full of churches and the houses of the prosperous merchant elite. The **Frans Hals Museum** is another of those Dutch gems, full not only of works by Hals himself, but by many of his contemporaries, in effect a summary of much we shall have seen during our week. After a final group lunch we continue to Amsterdam airport and the return flight to Heathrow.

## PRACTICALITIES

**Price** £2370                      **Without Flights** £2220                      **Deposit** £275

**Single Supplement** £395 (Double/Twin Room for Sole Use)

**Hotels** 3 nights with breakfast at the 4\* Carlton Ambassador, The Hague; 3 nights with breakfast at the 4\* Hotel Estherea, Amsterdam

**Hotel Upgrades** £135 for a Canal Room in the Hotel Estherea (for two sharing)

**Flights** British Airways

Outward: **BA434** Departs London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1145**, arrive Amsterdam **1405**

Return: **BA441** Departs Amsterdam **1925**, arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1945**

**Price includes** 3 dinners & 2 lunches with wine, water & coffee, all local transfers, City Tax, entry fees & gratuities, the services of Tom Duncan & our local tour manager

**Not included** Travel to/from Heathrow, 3 dinners & 4 lunches



CICERONI TRAVEL  
2 The Square, Aynho, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX17 3BL  
Telephone +44 (0) 1869 811167      Fax +44 (0) 1869 811188  
Email [info@ciceroni.co.uk](mailto:info@ciceroni.co.uk)      Website [www.ciceroni.co.uk](http://www.ciceroni.co.uk)

