

Dear Prof. Hellmuth Stachel,

I would like to thank you for sending me your text, written together with Prof. Gerhard Gutruf, regarding the reconstruction of Vermeer's perspective in the "Art of Painting". It is certainly a much welcomed addition to the study of Vermeer and I believe, as well, a healthy sign that others may be stimulated to express their own ideas concerning the impact of and the interpretation and processes involved in creating art. Naturally this work - in particular - has received much attention in the past and could well afford further scrutiny in the future. As I am sure you are well aware, the framework in which we, involved in this project, could report our findings were limited, as an exhibition catalog needs to follow specific criteria, regarding both depth and length. Many of the points of interests addressed in the catalog could (and should) be treated as separate studies in themselves, by specialists in the appropriate fields, as your text exemplifies.

Since much information concerning Vermeer's practice in painting has remained on my table, and was not included in the essay on *technique* for the catalog, perhaps you would allow me to extend some of this material for your present efforts regarding perspective and the camera obscura. Reading through your essay I would like to ask a few questions and perhaps make a suggestion or two.

You mention on page 2 that the construction could have been made based on two equidistant scales, with the point *V* being the deformation in paintfilm at the right edge. This is quite interesting, but I am having trouble following your drawing (fig 3). Judging from the position of the central vanishing point *H* (as determined on p. 3) the positioning of *V* in the diagram is further to the right than the deformation in the painting - or can it be positioned somewhere else along the scale? Of course, I considered the construction to be made from a three point (distance point) perspective system, which would allow for a more direct modelling of the 45 degree floor tiles, and assuming that the composition was created in a somewhat smaller format, probably half the original size, the distance points would be approx. 1.25 meters fully extended, not an insurmountable problem for an ordinary working surface.

On page 4 I believe the foot note is 4, not 1. I can provide for you the original text from Hulten, if you like.

Concerning previous efforts to explain the significance in placement of the horizon and distance points, and their direct effect on composition in paintings by Vermeer, there is an important article by Jorgen Wadum, "Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675) and His Use of Perspective, Historical Painting Techniques, Materials, and Studio Practice, Preprints of a Symposium, Leiden, 1995 Getty Conservation Institute, pp. 148-154, see p. 151.

Concerning the "mask", (which some scholars believe is not a mask per-se) the size is not at all unusual and known examples exist which are of larger dimensions.

On page 5 you have calculated 174.9 cm for the distance points. I have received several notices from other individuals who have also calculated these distances with quite sophisticated software and their results are around 170-172 cm. This shows, I believe, the latitude that exists in this calculation before any noticeable deviation is apparent.

The intended function of the graphic that I included in the catalog essay, was to illustrate the divisions of the golden section accurately, and to extend towards the painted elements - stool and chair - the resulting orthogonals. The drawing was meant to illustrate the relative precision between this set division and the orientation of key elements in the composition. I intentionally did not include numbers (lengths) or angles (degrees) as this was mainly an aesthetic correlation and not regarded solely as a process of construction. Indeed the precision of this underlying concept may have been subjected to other priorities as the painted image developed.

Regarding shadows, you may want to add that the easel has no identifiable shadow associated with it.

It was interesting to see that you were successful in calculating, (what I had assumed), that being that the perspective construction of the chair (and mainly the stool) is not consistent. The right edge of the stool seems to be more regular in terms of perspective than the back or left side which show a number of different projections of the orthogonals. I entertained the idea that the stool may not be square, or its painted result had adopted changes from the artist for formal (aesthetic) reasons.

Looking closely at the painting one can see that the paper folio on the table is clearly well behind the seated painter (towards the viewer).

I believe that the difference in calculations between Steadman and yourself, regarding the possible size of the tiles (27.5 to 29.5 cm.) is another clear example of how variations in calculations, arising from methodology and points of departure (extrapolating) can occur.

The table comparing corrected sizes is interesting in itself, however it does suggest that such an undertaking supports a belief that the elements actually once existed (a key premise in Steadman's argument) and rarely taken up by other studies in Vermeer's painting approach and technique in constructing.

I agree with your concluding statement that "... for Vermeer the laws of composing the area in a painting are of higher importance than a geometrically exact construction"

I wish both of you a successful lecture in Japan, and I hope that some of my well intended, suggestions, concerning the text, will prove helpful in some way.

If I can be of any help in the future please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely

Robert Wald